Constructing Spatial Accounts of Social Capital: Case Studies of the Catholic Church in the UK and Ireland

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirement of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the Faculty of Social Sciences, 1999

Abstract

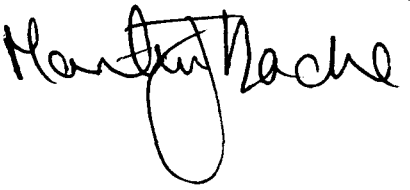
Social capital refers to the relational forms, such as trust, which underpin certain types of collective action. Social networks which are particularly rich in social capital can prove beneficial to their participants. They do this by enabling people to act collectively as well as facilitating the flow of useful information within communities. As such social capital represents a potential tool in the amelioration of the effects of social exclusion. Both of these concepts are seen to have distinct geographies. Whilst social exclusion is increasingly defined by low income urban areas, social capital is dependent upon certain forms which are also spatially distinct. The Catholic Church in the UK has recently entered the debate concerning this issue as a member of the Labour Government's Social Exclusion Unit. This is viewed as a significant development by virtue of the Church possessing many of the attributes which appear to make it a prime candidate for the generation of social capital. Accordingly, this thesis attempts to define the factors which influence the spatiality of the Church's social capital by investigating the factors which define the social capital-related activities within ten parishes in the UK and Ireland. This is seen as having two main implications. Firstly, it defines the Catholic Church's potential use of social capital within its parishes as a tool in tackling social exclusion – with implications for other bodies wishing to act similarly. Secondly, it also adds to the wider theoretical debate concerning the question of why social capital differs between communities. A diverse range of factors are seen to influence the nature and extent of church-related indicators of social capital within the ten parishes. Central among these is the tendency of priests to act as 'social entrepreneurs' within their parishes. Evidence from the Dublin parishes also suggests a number of lesson for their UK counterparts. It is concluded that, whilst potential exists for a church-based social capital, there is a need for the development of local 'coalitions' with other like-minded groups. This strategy is seen as crucial if the Church is to become more 'relevant' to the needs of its constituents and, in the process, reinvigorate itself as an institution.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups who assisted in the completion of this thesis: Andrew Leyshon and Nigel Thrift, at the School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol; the Central Statistics Office, Dublin; all those who spared their time to participate in interviews within the parishes, both in the UK and Ireland.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original (except where indicated by specific reference in the text) and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. This dissertation has not been presented to any other university, either in the UK or abroad. The views expressed by the dissertation are those of the author and are in no way representative of those of the University of Bristol.

Signed:  Date: 16.12.00

CONTENTS

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER FIVE SIX: THE BIRMINGHAM CASE STUDY

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE LIVERPOOL CASE STUDY

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE DUBLIN CASE STUDY

CHAPTER NINE: THESIS SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Figures and Tables

FIGURES

TABLES

Chapter 1: Introduction to main thesis themes

1. Introduction

Social capital has recently entered the lexicon of Government. At the same time, social exclusion has become the accepted terminology for the diverse forms of deprivation, both urban and rural, evident in the UK. The Labour Government's adoption of a 'third way,' strongly influenced by the work of Anthony Giddens (1999), places renewed significance upon the notions of citizenship and a 'stake-holder' society. Within this new approach, social capital is seen by many as a key component in the fight against exclusionary trends (Cm 4045, Peri 6, 1997). For the time being this potential exists only in a conceptual rather than applied sense. The practical implications of such arguments have yet to be fully worked through in the policy arena. At the same time, this renewed emphasis on civil actors corresponds with the Catholic Church's own attempts to redefine its role towards a civil society–based strategy, not only in the UK but in a global sense as well (Casanova, 1997). Through documents such as the 'Common Good' and its representation on the Governments Social Exclusion Unit, the Church is increasingly attempting to enter into the debate surrounding social exclusion. However, the Church also benefits from possessing a potential resource of social capital structures and forms. In tandem with this, and unlike many other agencies, it also maintains a presence and resources at the 'grassroots' level in many of the most deprived cities of the UK.

The main objective of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical debates which define the bulk of the thesis, these being developed in depth in subsequent chapters. This initially involves a brief discussion of the processes by which social exclusion is seen to operate. In particular, the role of social capital in the amelioration of social exclusion is discussed. Particular attention is drawn here to the work of the Government's Social Exclusion Unit as well as the Demos think tank. The social processes and ideological forms seen as representing social capital are also outlined, drawing heavily upon the work of James Coleman in particular. The chapter then goes

on to consider the work of Robert Putnam and others (Amin, 1997; Fukuyama, 1995, 1999; Leonardi, 1996; Ploeg & Long, 1998; Putnam et al, 1991). It is suggested that these accounts are limited as descriptions of the spatiality of social capital in an empirical sense and that this should be seen as having implications for understanding how and why social capital differs between communities. This in turn, is seen as having implications for any strategy, government based or otherwise, which wishes to incorporate social capital as a central element. Next, the role of the Catholic Church in the UK with regard to the amelioration of social exclusion is postulated in both a rhetorical and practical sense. In particular, the Church's capacity to 'generate' social capital is examined. An empirical framework to investigate these issues is suggested and an outline of the chapters given at the end.

2. Social Exclusion: a new form of deprivation

Social exclusion is a term which has recently entered the dialogue concerning the emergence of groups and sectors within society which increasingly find themselves subject to a new form of deprivation, one which is multi-faceted in nature (Lash, 1994; MacDonald, 1997; Kennet, 1994; Millar, 1997; Oppenheim, 1997; Walker, 1997; Peri 6, 1998). These groups find themselves not only socially and economically marginalised to the periphery of society but also excluded from the mainstream of leisure, culture and education (Oppenheim, 1997; Peri 6, 1997). Whilst incorporating a broader range of factors than simply poverty alone, social exclusion also represents an inability to participate in purposive life-chances and marginalisation from effective opportunities for certain individuals and groups in society:

> The term 'social exclusion' concentrates attention on the ways in which significant minorities are excluded from participating in the mainstream life of society: from jobs, education, homes, leisure, civic organisations, and even voting, and on how this disconnection tends to coincide with vulnerability to poverty, crime and family breakdown. (Peri 6, 1997 p.3).

As this suggests, in a less tangible manner social exclusion represents a palpable sense of alienation, an imposition of psychological distance and access to society and its wider structures. The processes involved can also be seen as dynamic in nature. Different elements of

social exclusion reinforce its overall impact. An example of this being financial exclusion.[1] The net result being that the individuals access to wider society is inhibited. Evidence suggests that in recent decades these trends have become increasingly apparent. In turn, this trend – in part at least – has been a response to the wide-scale restructuring of the economies of Western Europe and North America (Brown & Crompton, 1997; Bruegel & Hegewich, 1997; Kennet, 1997). Change has been most evident in the drive towards flexibility in work practices and employment patterns. Traditional interpretations of the welfare state have been replaced accordingly[2] (Jessop, 1996;1997; Meyer, 1995). For its part, the Labour Government's response to the phenomena of social exclusion has drawn heavily upon the work of Anthony Giddens (1999). Characterised as a 'third way', a reference to its roots in the social democratic tradition, this is an approach which rejects the discrete boundaries of left and right in politics which have traditionally either sort to diminish, or conversely, expand the role of the state (*ibid* p.70).

Instead, it places a heavy emphasis upon the mobilisation of civil actors to address the problems of many urban neighbourhoods. A weakening sense of solidarity in such areas is seen as a contributory factor in the cycle of exclusion. With its reliance upon notions such as 'citizenship' and the 'stake holder society', it makes reference to the more inclusive approach which is conceived as necessary in the fight against social exclusion. Cooperation and the encouragement of a culture of self-help, are seen as vital if such areas are to break the cycle of exclusion. In what is seen as a direct challenge to the 'old left' (*ibid*, p.78), renewal through harnessing local initiative, community based crime prevention, the democratic family[3], and the involvement of the public sphere are all seen as vital in this process.

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[1]Conaty (1992) has noted the phenomena of the 'flight of capital' away from areas of 'least return' by the major clearing banks in the UK since the mid-80s. This has tended to leave the poorest areas, and those in most need, without access to legitimate forms of credi and finance. This increases rescourse to the use of illegal loan sharks, adding to the cycle of deprivation

[2] Jessop's (1991) 'hollowing out' thesis charts the gradual denudation of the institutions of the welfare state in favour of a 'workfare' alternative, whilst Meyer (1993) has pointed to the emergence of a 'third sector' of participants in the provision of welfare and social services as a response to 'changing modes of accumulation'

[3] Gidden's (1999) suggests that, "Democratic family relationships imply shared responsibility for child care, especially greater sharing among women and men, and among parents and non-parents, since in society at large, mothers are bearing a disproportionate share of the costs (and againing a disproportionate share of the emotional rewards) of children".

Adopting the 'third way', has required radical changes to the very machinery of government with regards to implementation of ameliorative policies and programmes, as encapsulated by the Government's social exclusion unit. Set up in December 1997 by the Prime Minister, the unit represents a forum for both governmental departments and non-government organisations (NGOs). Through a consultative process, particular issues – education and youth were among the first – are targeted by Policy Action Teams and a collaborative strategy developed between local and regional agencies to tackle these.

True to Gidden's vision, as well as an interdepartmental approach within government, the unit also incorporates actors in the civil apparatus of society, those who are seen as having experience of tackling social exclusion[4]. A central concern identified by the unit is the concentration of exclusionary trends within urban neighbourhoods. Within the context of the Strategy for Urban Renewal, a range of initiatives and innovative approaches to the problem of social exclusion in urban areas has been developed. Emphasis, in particular, has fallen upon the potential to utilise informal social structures, or social capital, in tackling these problems (Cm 4045).

This approach has been developed conceptually by the Demos think tank. Social capital is seen as one of a number of tools in tackling social exclusion. In particular, informal networks are seen as having value to those who find themselves excluded. For instance, being able to draw upon a widely dispersed pool of acquaintances in a social setting is particularly valuable in gaining knowledge of job opportunities. Others also highlight the importance of not reinforcing negative expectations through the wrong kind of networks – typified by many Government inspired schemes– which give the unemployed access to negative role models (Peri 6, 1997 p.14). In a more direct sense, social capital can also lead to the development of innovative and localised responses to the needs of an effected community. Credit unions, local economic

[4] Among the bodies and representatives upon the unit are the local authorities and police constabularies in the effected areas, as well as the National Housing Association, the Probation Service, the Prison Service and the Churches Urban Fund (Cm 4045)

trading systems (LETS), are just two examples of the ways in which local capacity could be harnessed in the fight against exclusionary processes.

3. Social Capital: The Catholic Church and social exclusion

As discussed in the previous section, social capital has been identified as a crucial element in the fight against social exclusion (Cm 4045). The development of networks rich in forms such as trust, and reciprocal relationships is seen as vital in addressing the problem in disadvantaged communities (Peri 6, 1997). The concept of social capital is itself a product of the socioeconomic tradition (Granovetter, 1988; Lin, 1976;). A central aspect of this approach is the recognition that, to be fully understood, economic processes have to be seen as 'embedded' within a social context. The notion of social capital developed as an attempt to define the social forms and structures, including trust, which effect and influence economic outcomes (Loury, 1977). Accordingly, it was initially conceptualised as a set of resources which are inherent within certain social structures, in particular families and communities, which are significant in the development of human capital (Bourdieu, 1997; Loury, 1977).

However, it is Coleman (1988;1990) who has developed the most detailed classification of the processes involved in the operation of social capital. Coleman suggests that social capital has a number of distinct forms. Among these are, trust, obligations, norms of behaviour, collective sanction, reciprocal relationships and ideology. Acting either independently or in tandem, these can aid collective action for specific purposes, whether it be oriented socially, economically or otherwise. In particular, Coleman introduced the notion of the geographically 'closed' community into the development of social capital. Such communities can become defined around a church, school or any other locally based group for that matter. But, what they had in common, is their potential to develop networks of interaction and cooperation for a mutual and beneficial end. This is the type of effect the Government hopes to engender in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England (Cm 4045). The work of the DEMOS group, in particular, emphasises the role of social capital through the development of networks in the revitalisation of opportunities and life chances. Yet, the geography of these processes, both social exclusion and social capital, must be seen as a crucial element in defining a response. Not only is it

important in pinpointing where the problem is, but also in defining potential responses oriented around social capital. It also significant to the conceptual understanding of 'why stocks of social capital differ between communities' (Putnam, 1993 p. 38).

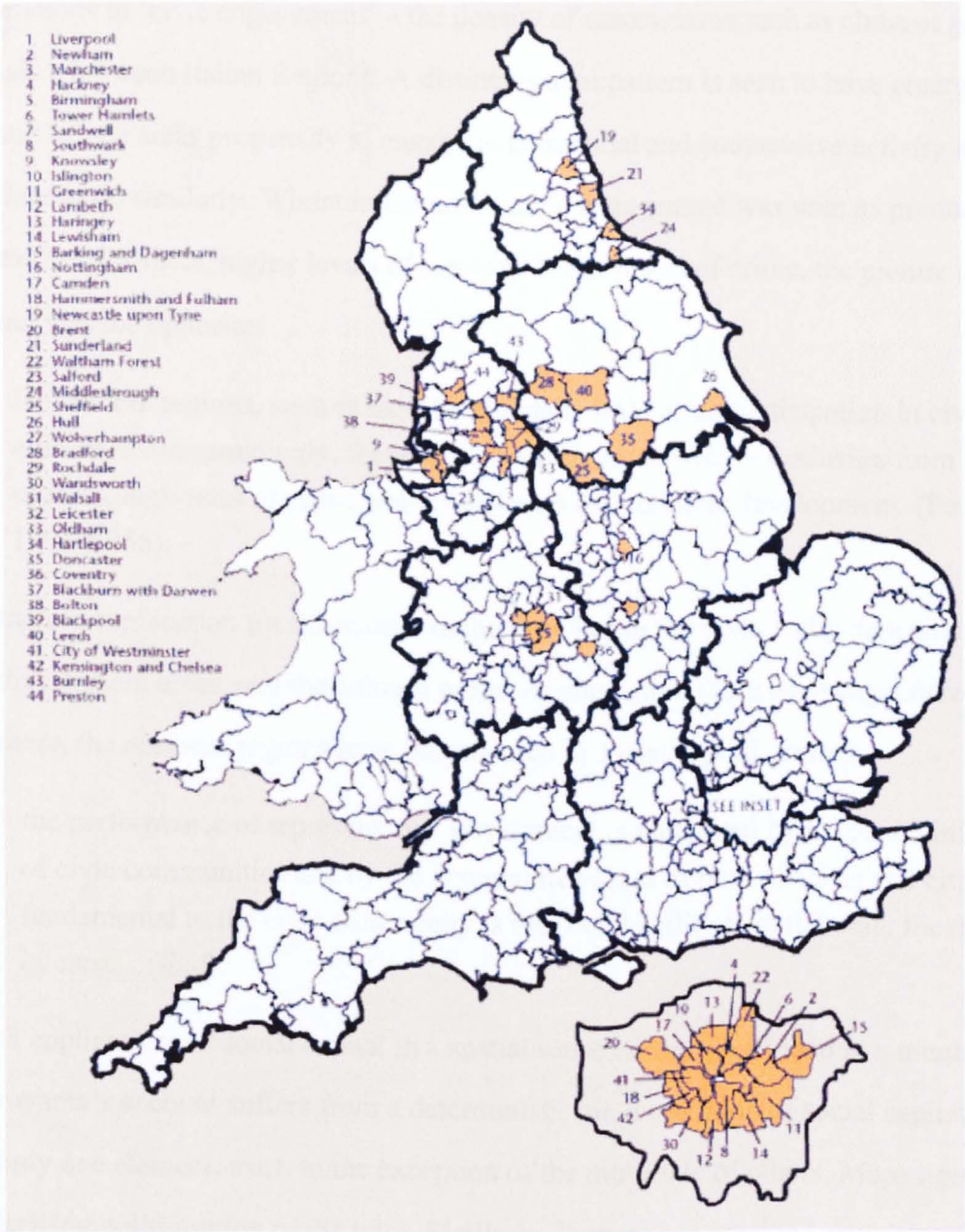
4. Spatiality of social exclusion and social capital

Social exclusion is a spatial phenomenon. It has a distinct geographic form. Certain 'places' are more likely to be characterised as suffering from exclusionary trends than others. In the UK, this has resulted in the polarisation of deprivation in urban areas. These processes are particularly evident in the larger cities (Figure 1). Between 1981 and 1991, it was the urban wards most in need which witnessed the greatest increases in relative levels of deprivation. Not only was this true in terms of employment, but also levels of health and quality of housing (Lee et al, 1995, p.11). This has given rise to a distinct geography of disadvantage, with poor people increasingly marginalised to poor quality run-down public housing schemes.

Yet social capital too, has a distinct geography. It varies spatially in its extent and nature, from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. It is more likely to develop in certain locales, those which have a distinct focus. Such neighbourhoods tend to be successful at promoting a frequency of interaction between their members. As a result, they are more likely to develop social capital and benefit accordingly. Frequent interaction between community members can promote the development of trust, co-operation, mutual awareness of need and the diffusion of information valuable to the individual in their attempts to break free of exclusionary trends. All of these can prove vital in enhancing not only employment opportunities, but in providing mutual support networks and social outlets which can mitigate the psychological and emotional effects of social exclusion.

The spatial interpretation of this concept has, to date, concentrated upon differences between the national and regional 'stocks' or resources of social capital (Fukuyama, 1995, 1999; Leonardi, 1995; Putnam, 1991; Putnam et al, 1993). Patterns of effective government, crime, economic development and civic participation have all been attributed to the spatiality of social capital. Fukuyama (1993), for one, has suggested that the geography of economic growth, in a global sense, can be partially attributed to varying levels and forms of one particular type of

Figure 1 **44 Most deprived local authority districts according to the 1998 Index of local deprivation (in descending order of deprivation)**



(Source: Social Exclusion Unit 1998)

social capital, that is trust. For his part, Putnam has applied the notion in his account of variations in 'civic engagement' – the density of associations such as clubs or groups of various kinds – between Italian Regions. A distinct spatial pattern is seen to have emerged here as a result of one areas propensity to engage in communal and cooperative activity and anothers failure to do similarly. Whilst in the north, civic engagement was seen as producing egalitarian patterns of politics, higher levels of trust and lower levels of crime, the picture in the non-civic south was the opposite:

> in southern regions, such as the Mezziorgano, little or no participation in civic-life was evident. Correspondingly, these areas were characterised by exclusion from the political process, high rates of crime and lower levels of economic development. (Putnam et al, 1993 p.256).

Putnam's explanation for this spatial dichotomy lies in the historically dependent forms evident in the northern areas, and the cultural norms of interaction these have engendered. As a result of these, the northern regions have become rich in social capital, so that:

> the performance of representative government is facilitated by the social infrastructure of civic communities and by the democratic values of both officials and citizens. Most fundamental to the civic community is the social ability to collaborate for shared interests. (*ibid*).

Such applications of social capital in a spatial sense can be questioned in a number of ways. Fukuyama's account suffers from a deterministic air, a rendition of social capital which focuses on only one element, trust, to the exception of the multitude of others. More significantly is his underlying politicisation of the term. Similarly, Putnam has attracted criticism, albeit of a more conventional nature. Criticism has arisen, in particular, with respect to the conceptual and theoretical rigour applied in the study of the Italian regions. This concerns Putnam's failure to adequately elaborate the processes at work, particularly the connection between micro and macro-structures of participation. Whilst the 'culture' of civil engagement in the northern Regions is attributed by Putnam to a density of locally based interactions, how this actually occurs in practice is never really addressed through his account. As a result of this some have argued that,

> In the civic communities, individuals become citizens who will act with and trust others, even when they do not know them personally. This may be a description of what is, but it is not a theory that identifies the mechanisms of production, maintenance and growth of social capital. (Levi, 1995 p. 56)

Putnam's work offers a number of salutary lessons. At the core of his interpretation is spatial differences between 'stocks', or resources, of social capital. Yet, interpreting the diversity of micro-structures such as groups, clubs, churches and branch associations as representative of social capital has its limitations (Fox, 1997 p.1045):

> The micro-units of choral societies and soccer clubs are taken to be indicators of the stock of social capital spread throughout society. This view assumes that social capital is "continuously distributed" both horizontally and vertically.

These limitations are significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, if social capital is to be utilised as a tool in the amelioration of social exclusion, the factors which define its geography must be seen as crucial. Not only do these define the nature of types and sources of social capital but also their replicability in other areas. If existing accounts are limited, better versions will need to be developed. And this leads directly to the second point, namely Putnam's own query regarding the reasons why 'stocks of social capital differ between communities' (Putnam, 1993 p.24). The increasing role of groups such as the Catholic Church marks the emergence of a civil society-oriented approach to social exclusion in the UK, and, as the following section suggests, there are reasons for seeing the Church as a particularly valuable contributor in this capacity.

5. 'Civil 'Approaches: The Catholic Church

Among the various civil actors who have gained a voice through the Government's Social Exclusion Unit is the Catholic Church. Its participation can also be seen as part of a general movement within the Church towards a more civil-society based strategy[5] (Casanova, 1996). In

[5] Casanova's thesis is that the Catholic Church is increasingly moving away from a state-centred to cvil society-oriented strategy as part of a legitimation process in a context of increasing secularisation but also under the influence of the more socially progressive doctrine of the Church which emerged after the Second Vatican Council in the 60s. This also has resonance with the work of Beyer (1995), who has interpreted pronoucements made by the Christain church elites of North America as being a 'barometer' of societal issues both regionally and globally

the UK this has been particularly evident in the willingness of the Catholic Bishops to engage in the debate surrounding social exclusion, expressing this in the following terms

> If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participation in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then this is a contradiction to the concept of the common good and calls for rectification.

What sets the Church apart from other actors concerned with social exclusion, however, is that it has a number of advantages over participants. Firstly, the parish represents a 'closed' community, one which can engender a frequency of interaction between its members. As Coleman (1988,1990) suggests, this conjunction of structure and focus can engender the development of forms of social capital such as trust and reciprocity and the development of networks useful in tackling social exclusion. Secondly, through its parishes, the Church can also be seen as maintaining a 'grass roots' presence in many of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Cities such as Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester all possess large Catholic populations and all have among the highest rates of deprivation in the UK. Lastly, in an ideological sense, the Church can also benefit from the influence of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which places the poor in society at its centre.[6]

Potential for action on the part of the Church is already evident. One of its more notable successes has been in the creation of credit unions in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. These are small – usually encompassing only a neighbourhood – groups, run by local residents, which provide modest amounts of credit at negligible interest rates on the basis of regular contributions from their participants. In turn, credit unions can benefit from the existence of a common associational tie or 'bond' which engenders trust amongst participants as to credit repayments and provides a context for regular contributions from members. In the

[6] CST is based upon a number of defining notions. Central to these are 'Subsidiarity', 'Solidarity' and what is termed 'The Common Good'. Since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, CST has become an increasingly responsive doctrine in a social sense, typified by the Church's adoption of a 'preferential option for the poor'. In a tangible sense, the impact of this has been seen through the actions of clerics and lay people alike, who have interpreted the doctrine in a number of ways. In turn, CST could also be seen as fulfilling the 'ideological' element of Coleman's (1988) classification of forms of social capital, expressed in what is termed the 'public goods' aspect of the concept.

case of Ireland, Berthoud and Hinton (1991) suggest perhaps the key to their success has been the common associational bond provided by the Catholic Church (p.124).

Credit unions can be particularly potent as tools in community capacity building, that is, providing a focal rallying point for disadvantaged and disaffected groups and communities in both the UK and Ireland (Berthoud and Hinton 1989; Douthwaite, 1997). As a strategy against financial exclusion they may also present a valuable tool to disadvantaged groups providing banking services when residents have no longer have access to main street banking. Douthwaite (1997 p.127-128) highlights the example of the St Columba's Credit Union in Bradford, which started from a church and subsequently acquired its own premises after the one remaining high street bank in the area had closed. More generally, evidence suggests that this potential could be harnessed to develop a more coherent strategy to fight social exclusion at the local level. Hornsby-Smith (1988 p.581) notes the example of one Catholic parish in Northern Ireland where such a 'density of networks' has been achieved, encompassing an advice centre for those receiving social security benefits, a group for the handicapped, a ministry for the divorced and separated and other organisations aimed at improving the quality of life for its parishioners.

As of yet, such examples are perhaps the exception. wide variation exists in both the nature and extent of activity within diocese and between parishes (Hornsby-Smith, 19988; 1989). A distinct geography defines the role of Catholic churches in the development of groups, associations and societies indicative of social capital. Obviously, this should be of concern to an organisation which wishes to utilise social capital in tackling exclusionary forces. A first step must surely be to gain an understanding of what forms this geography, why it is that some parishes are more successful at developing groups and others less so. Naturally, this question also has significance more generally to actors other than the Church who perceive themselves in a similar role. The Governments drive to encourage actors drawn form the civil apparatus to take greater responsibility within deprived neighbourhoods, to develop networks, form bonds and act cooperatively, has to be tempered by the question of how social capital from different sources produces different outcome. Who benefits? Can different groups interact? Because of

the novel combination of a socially progressive ideology, localised, community-based structures and a vigour for addressing the issue of social exclusion, the Church presents an opportune testing ground in which to investigate these questions.

6. Summary and chapter outline

Social exclusion is increasingly a spatially defined problem. Areas with low incomes, social-sector housing and urban decay are increasingly synonymous with the phenomena. The Government has examined a variety of innovative policy approaches in an attempt to stop exclusion. Social capital has been identified as one potential solution to a problem which is multi-faceted in nature. Yet, the nature of the structures and processes it relies upon mean that social capital can also be seen as having a distinct geography. The discussion in this chapter has suggested two things. Firstly, that if social capital is to be utilised as a tool against social exclusion, the spatiality of this resource has to be defined in some way. Secondly, that existing accounts of its spatiality are insufficient for this purpose. The Catholic Church may be particularly well placed to act in such a capacity. It possesses many of the forms and structures crucial to the development of social capital within communities. Additionally, it has a 'grass roots' presence in many of the most deprived areas of the UK. A number of questions follow from this understanding which have pertinence for the theoretical understanding of how and why social capital differs between communities (Putnam , 1993).

The following chapters are divided into three main sections. The first section examines the conceptual background to the thesis, looks at the development of social capital as a notion, relates this to the catholic church and places both of these in the context of social exclusion. The second part of the thesis consists of the development and implementation of an empirical framework of investigation for a number of questions which emerge through the conceptual discussion.

Chapter two examines the concept of social capital. This initially involves situating it within the wider 'socioeconomic' approach which developed through the work of Granovetter (1977) and others (Lin, 1981; Loury, 1977, 1987). Social capital is seen as being defined through

distinct social forms and structures which can prove beneficial to their participants. Through the work of James Coleman (1988,1990), the concept is seen to consist of a variety of forms. Among these are trust, obligations, norms of behaviour, collective sanction, reciprocal relationships and ideology. As well as this, Coleman's notion of the 'closed community' in the development of such forms is discussed. Various applications of the term are then highlighted (Putnam et al, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995, 1999). Factors in the creation and destruction of social capital are also discussed. Spatial applications of the social capital are highlighted through the work of Fukuyama (1999) and others (Putnam, 1993; Leonardi, 1995). These accounts are criticised on a number of grounds (Fox, 1997; Levi, 1993). As a result of this it is suggested that if we are to gain a better understanding of why, as Putnam (1993 p.23) argues, communities differ in their stocks of social capital, new accounts will have to be developed.

Chapter three applies the forms and structures discussed in Chapter two to the example of the Catholic church, in an attempt to define it as a potential source of social capital. One such form with particular relevance here is seen to be ideology. Catholic social teaching is introduced as a socially responsive doctrine which places the disadvantaged within society as its central concern. Aspects of social capital such as 'public goods', it is argued, may be particularly pertinent to the Church. As well as this, the spatiality of institutional structure of the Church is seen as having implications for the provision of social capital-based activities. Communities based around parishes are seen as offering the potential for the Church to develop forms such as trust, cooperation, obligations and reciprocal relationships.

Chapter four places the conceptual understanding of social capital so far developed in the context of the UK and Ireland. Initially, this involves outlining the spatiality of respective church structures, from the national to the local. The role of these structures is seen as having renewed significance in the context of responses to social exclusion. Church oriented responses to this phenomena, both rhetorical and practical, are outlined. Through initiatives such as credit unions, LETS and other locally based groups, the Catholic Church is actively playing a role. But potential remains unfulfilled, for the time being, and this is especially true in the UK.

Those factors which create the distinct geography of activities among parishes is seen as crucial to understanding the limits of social capital development by the Church. An outline of the main thesis questions is also given at the end of this chapter.

Chapter five develops a framework of investigation for the main thesis questions. An initial issue dealt with is the oppositional view of qualitative and quantitative approaches to empirical work. The approach adopted rejects these discrete boundaries and instead opts for an approach in which the methodology is defined by the nature of the questions themselves. As a result of this, both intensive and extensive elements are chosen. One of the main tools selected for the in-depth aspect of this is the semi-structured interview. Procedural issues relating to the use of this technique are discussed including protocol, negotiating status with the clergy, coding and analysis. Site selection is also discussed in detail. One issue of particular relevance here is 'theoretical sampling'. The relevance of 'positionality' within the empirical process is discussed. Secondary sources of material are also elaborated, including census-based and other databases. How social capital is to be identified within the parishes is another issue which is dealt with.

Chapter six relates the findings which emerged through the study of four parishes, A to D, within the diocese of Birmingham. An initial step in this process is the profiling of each parish, both in terms of the social and economic trends it exhibits but also in terms of indicators of social capital. In this way, four distinct contexts are defined within which to extrapolate the in-depth findings from the semi-structured interviews. The views and opinions of the respondents within each parish are then discussed at length. Following this, the main trends seen to effect the development of social capital-related indicators are listed. These are then linked back to the conceptual understanding of social capital to gauge its salience in the context of the Birmingham case study. Chapters Seven and Eight deal with the case studies of Liverpool and Dublin. Chapter nine provides an executive summary of the main thesis findings and makes some conclusions as to what they actually say about the Church as a producer of social capital and the spatial representation of the concept.

Chapter 2: The Spatiality of Social Capital

1. Introductio

This chapter will introduce the concept of social capital. This will initially be achieved via an exposition of the Socioeconomic approach to the functioning of economic and social systems through the work of Mark Granovetter and others (Bourdieu, 1996; Lin, 1982; Lin et al, 1981; Loury, 1987; Wrong, 1963). Following this, the second section situates social capital within this wider socioeconomic approach and elaborates its main tenets, in particular through the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1996) and James Coleman (1988, 1990). In turn, subsequent sections focus upon the spatiality of the concept. This initially involves examining the notion of the 'closed community' in the production of social capital in specific locations (Coleman, 1988,1990; Fukuyama, 1995a,1995b, 1999; Putnam, 1993, 1995). Next, a number of accounts of the spatial variation in 'stocks' of social capital are discussed (Fukuyama, 1995; Leonardi, 1995; Putnam, 1993). These are argued to be inadequate for the purpose of elaborating the spatiality of the various forms and structures which represent the notion. As a result of this, it is suggested that there is a need for the development of alternative accounts if the reasons for differences in stocks of social capital between communities are to be more fully understood.

2. Understanding the socioeconomic

The socioeconomic approach to economic action emerged primarily as a response to what were perceived to be the inadequacies of the prevailing economic and sociological accounts (Brubaker, 1985; Granovetter, 1985; Lin, 1982; Wilson, 1997; Wrong, 1963). These had alternately resulted in over- and undersocialized conceptions of economic behaviour and its related institutions which, paradoxically, were both ultimately guilty of the same atomistic interpretation. In classical and neo-classical economic accounts for instance the individual is seen as driven by rational processes to self-interest, subsumed within a market system within which there exists a free flow of knowledge and information upon which all transactions can be based. In this scenario, social structures are either seen as an irrelevance to the functioning of

the economic system or, at best, as an undesirable frictional element upon that system. In oversocialized conceptions, in turn, norms of behaviour and obligations are seen to be internalized within a society, so that a set of societal norms are produced whereby the individual willingly becomes subsumed through adherence to embedded norms in the larger social structure.

Crucially, Granovetter and others (Lin, 1982; Lin et al, 1981; Wrong, 1963) argue that these traditional approaches ignore the dynamism of social structures, composed as they are of myriad human relations, and their importance in the interpretation of patterns of human behaviour and related institutions:

> A fruitful analysis of human action requires us to avoid the atomization implicit in the theoretical extremes of under- and over socialized conceptions. Actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead imbedded in concrete, ongoing systems of relations. (Granovetter, 1985 p.487).

The limitations of these traditional accounts, and the merits of the embedded approach highlighted by Granovetter, become apparent in their respective approaches to the problem of trust and malfeasance in economic life. An undersocialized account of this problem would emphasis the discipline of the markets, which would be called upon to mitigate deceit in a situation of imperfect competition, as represented by a neoclassical explanation of social structures, through the new institutional economics of Williamson and others (Baker, 1983; Rosen, 1982). In oversocialized accounts, meanwhile, trust is adopted as part of a general morality, problems being mitigated by certain institutional arrangements which develop in response, such as contracts, which function as a replacement for trust. Again, however, such interpretations are guilty of failing to take into account the role of social relations and networks of trust, as well as obligations, which often define behaviour in these situations, acting as a deterrent to institutional malfeasance, representative of the embedded account of not only economic but more general human behaviour. The work of Lin (1982) and others (Lin et al, 1981) illustrates how these structures provide information regarding the trustworthiness of

actors through networks of sustained, often uncodifed, contact, in order to reduce opportunism. Granovetter's embedded account of human action is representative of a wider effort to address the limitations inherent in the traditional accounts by engaging in some degree of cross-over in ideas and theoretical orientation (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1982; Loury, 1977; 1987; Granovetter, 1985). This process has seen the emergence of the concept of social capital into the analysis of social systems including those which are economic in nature (Bourdieu, 1978; 1986; Coleman, 1988; 1990; Loury, 1977; 1987):

> The concept of social capital also mocks the other leading tenet of mainstream economics-the idea of 'economic man', the individual separate self rationally calculating the costs and benefits of his every action on the basis of self-interest. Instead, the concept of social capital lends legitimacy to the idea of individual-in-community: each person is defined not just alone but in relationship to others; each person seeks to be part of something larger and can realise him or herself only when part of something larger. (Wilson, 1997 p.756)

Loury (1977; 1987) uses the term to describe the set of resources seen as inherent within both familial and community structures of social interaction. These are argued to represent a valuable resource, for children and adolescents in particular, with regards to the development of human capital as well as other cognitive or social benefits. Bourdieu (1996) interprets the term more generally as the advantages and opportunities accruing to people through membership in certain communities. Coleman (1988; 1990), in turn, develops his analysis of the concept from the rational base of exchange theory, importing aspects of social organization and using social capital as a tool with which to accomplish this. In such a way social capital is conceptualised as a form of resource which is available, to varying extents and with varying levels of interest involved, to actors in a social system. In turn, social capital is a concept which can be seen as becoming tangible only through its function:

> It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure. (Coleman, 1988 p.S98).

Furthermore, in common with other forms of capital, social capital is seen as productive in nature, as a tool with which to achieve certain aims and objectives which, in its absence, would remain unrealised. In common with physical and human capital, it can be specific to certain activities. As such, whilst one type of social capital may be of considerable worth to one particular group, it may have little value to another. Indeed, it may even be detrimental to them in some way. Yet, unlike other forms of capital, social capital is only tangible in the structures of social interaction between actors:

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu, 1996 p.51)

The value of social capital as an analytical tool is that it identifies specific aspects of social interaction which are beneficial to the individual. In turn, Coleman specifies a number of forms of social relations which - in their operation - are representative of social capital. The first of these relates to obligations, expectations as well as trust, in terms of their role within a particular social structure. Trustworthiness relates to whether or not outstanding obligations between individuals in a network are satisfactorily met. Expectations, in turn, can be seen as arising as a function of this process. Another aspect of social relations which has significance for collective action is their capacity to convey information (Coleman, 1988 p.S104). Collating information upon which to base a decision can be both time consuming and costly, but these factors can be minimised by using social structures which are already in place to acquire such material. Indeed, Coleman highlights how these structures may be represented by networks of interaction which have been created for a wholly different purpose.

Other important forms of social capital are norms, in conjunction with collective sanctions, "When a norm exists and is effective, it constitutes a powerful, though sometimes fragile, form of social capital" (Coleman, 1988 p.S104). Within a social network, a particularly enabling norm is that which sees the individual forgo personal aims for those of the group, "In some

cases, the norms are internalized; in others, they are largely supported through external rewards for selfless actions and disapproval for selfish actions. But, whether supported by internal or external sanctions, norms of this sort are important in overcoming the public goods problem that exists in collectivities" (p.S105). In turn, the maintenance of such norms is best achieved in networks which are 'closed' to external interference, "Closure of the social structure is important not only for the existence of effective norms but also for another form of social capital: the trustworthiness of social structures that allows the proliferation of obligations and expectations" (Coleman, 1988 p.S107). Following from this exposition of Coleman's work, the next section attempts to illustrates how these concepts have been adopted as an explanatory tool by commentators in the field of socioeconomic development.

3. The spatiality of social capital

Central to the expressions of the spatial nature of social capital is the idea of the 'closed community' (Coleman, 1988;1990). In a general sense, what this notion relates to is the manner in which certain places are more liable to create forms of social capital, such as trust and obligations, than others. They do this in a number of ways. Firstly, closed communities are relatively small and geographically confined so that their members, by nature, act in close proximity. A lack of physical distance between members can increase the likelihood of interaction of various types. Linkages of an intergenerational nature are also more likely to develop in such context. Children, their parents and teachers develop contacts through local schools which can also broaden local networks. Forms of cooperation are more likely to develop in such places rather than in those where the barriers, whether physical or social in nature, limit the likelihood that relational ties can be created. A second aspect of this is the existence of a 'common bond' or a focus for the community which, again, encourages a frequency of interaction. This may be political, religious or even based around a sporting or social club. The pay-off for these communities can be diverse. They may benefit from lower crime, improved local representation in government, or welfare for disadvantaged groups (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993).

For his part, Coleman has applied the idea of the 'closed community' to educational outcomes. His own study looked at the effect of public and private schools on student outcomes in the US. What he found was that religiously-based schools exhibited not only higher achievement scores in standardized tests, but also lower dropout rates. Coleman attributed this pattern to the religious community surrounding such schools acting as a form of social capital, providing support to both the schools and its students:

> The social capital of intergenerational clozure exists in some isolated small towns and rural areas where the social relations among adults are restricted by geographic distance and residential mobility less important. Intergenerational clozure exists in schools based in a religious community, such as Catholic schools, although the social relations which make up the community are more narrowly focused around a single dimension of social life, the religious institution. (Coleman, 1996 p.388).

What this suggests in practice is that the supportive framework of a closed social system, in relation with the school, exhibiting a high degree of intergenerational clozure, enabling the implementation of sanctions, norms and adherence to mutual expectations that are beneficial in students attaining desirable outcomes from their education. Important here are also the flows of information, or the dialogue, between parents as well as between parents and their children which act to define educational choices, targets and expectations. Coleman suggests that familial support of this nature can have a significant impact upon educational outcomes[1]:

> For children with deficiencies in familial social capital, such as the children of single-parent households, children whose parents have both worked before the child was in school, and children who report little communication with their parents on personal matters, the dropout rate is somewhat higher than for children without these deficiencies. (Coleman, 1990 p.380).

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[1] Particular attention has been paid by Coleman (1988;1990) and others (Aquilino, 1996; Hagan et al, 1996; Sanders and Nee, 1996) to the efficacy of the family unit as a particular form of social capital in the production of a diverse range of positive and negative outcomes. These range from the development of human capital and the social as well as emotional well being of siblings to the role of familial structures in the success of certain ethnic groups in maintaining small-scale family based enterprises.

Teachman et al (1996) provide a more refined interpretation of the community and family effect in relation to children who attend Catholic schools. What their study showed was that students of such schools benefited from access to a number of forms of social capital. In particular, they found that such children were more likely to have parents who knew the parents of their closest friends as well as parents who were more involved in some capacity with their schools either through PTA, fund-raising or some related social function. In turn, students at Catholic high-schools also exhibited a higher degree of parent-child connectivity, providing an arena in which decisions about education could be made in on a mutual basis. Students of Catholic schools were also found to be less effected by frequent school changes caused by parental relocation for job reasons.

In turn, Sanders and Nee's (1996) study of patterns of self-employment among Asian and Hispanic migrants in the United States further develops the understanding of the processes by which familial social capital operates and is mitigated. As in the case of Colemans's study it was found that the impact of social capital was often mitigated by a lack of human or financial capital, although this was by no means the rule. This represents what Coleman refers to as a 'functional' deficiency in the system, as opposed to deficiencies which are 'structural' in nature, denoting a basic lack of social capital. Human capital, in particular, often plays a key role in the production and reproduction of social capital, and this relationship can be seen to operate in reverse and also include factors such as financial capital. This suggests that a symbiotic relationship exists between differing types of capital in which the nature of the interaction is defined by the social structures involved and the desired outcomes so that the relevance of specific types of capital is largely a function of availability.

Yet, others have questioned the measurements used by Coleman in relation to his work on familial and community based social capital (Furstenburg and Hughes, 1995; Teachman et al, 1996):

> As stimulating as Coleman's arguments may be, his measurement of social capital is weak. For example, the relationship between a simple measure indicating whether there are two parents in the family and social capital is likely to be imperfect at best. (Teachman et al, 1995).

In practice what these arguments point to is the need for a greater sensitivity towards the often diverse outcomes, structures and relationships which characterise the operation of social capital but which have a tendency to be subsumed under the all-encompassing rubric of the term, without due course to the more discrete dimensions of social relations that are often linked to different outcomes whilst still being representative of one particular form of social capital. This has particular significance in the micro-level of analysis where a range of differing outcomes and forms may be evident from a given community or familial structure which, on the surface, appear to serve the same purpose. Issues of measurement are also raised by Hagan et al (1996) who argue that the operationalisation of Coleman's concept in relation to the family would benefit from a wider acceptance of what they term 'traditional' parenting variables. Criticism has also been levelled, more generally, at the basis of Coleman's ideas in 'rational choice' theory.[2]

4. Spatial representations of social capital

The spatial interpretation of social capital has, to date, concentrated upon differences between national and regional 'stocks' of the resource (Fukuyama, 1995a, 1995b; Leonardi, 1995; Putnam, 1993, 1995; Putnam et al, 1993). Patterns of effective governance, crime, economic development and civic participation have all been accredited to the spatiality of social capital. Robert Putnam's work on the Italian regions is perhaps the most widely debated application of social capital in a geographic sense. What his study pointed to was the centrality of a range of social structures in the economic development and effective government of certain Italian regions. Such outcomes, so his argument goes, have been based upon a 'thickness' of networks, these including, cooperatives, mutual aid societies, neighbourhood associations, as well as other sporting and social groups, which are seen to underpin collective action in these areas for three main reasons.

[2] The basis for Coleman's abstraction of social capital, namely rational exchange theory, has been questioned (Hechter et al, 1992; Münch, 1992; Scheff, 1992). In particular, criticism has arisen with regard to what many perceive to be deficiencies in the emotional bases of the theory in relation to human action (Simcock, 1993; Scheff, 1992).

The first of these reasons is that networks of civic engagement are assumed to reduce the likelihood of opportunism by a potential defector with regard to a particular transaction in a given community. This is because by defecting the individual puts at risk the benefits not only of any current transaction but also any potential benefits accumulated by the group in the future by virtue of being ostracised from that group (Putnam et al, 1993 p.173). This interpretation closely follows Coleman's thesis, in terms of adherence within a network to a set of group norms, in conjunction with the implementation of effective sanctions. Strong norms of reciprocity are also viewed as being encouraged by networks of civic engagement. These are developed when individuals interact regularly in a range of social contexts. Such norms relate not only to the types of behaviour that are acceptable in a particular context but also the expectations concerning behaviour that individuals have with respect to one another (Putnam et al, 1993 p.173). Putnam also points to the manner in which networks of civic engagement facilitate communication, conduits for the flow of information, which have a diverse range of beneficial attributes, social as well as economic in nature. These networks are seen to have acted as culturally-defined templates for the continuation of this trajectory by virtue of their success.

Key then, to this account of differential spatial outcomes among Italian regions is the operation of social capital. This is seen to be embodied in specific social structures which have created norms and networks which, in turn, have engendered a form of civic culture, a precondition not only of economic progress in such regions but also effective government. Leonardi (1995), in particular, points to the significance of crime as a key element in reducing civic patronage and neutralising the effectiveness of policies designed to address structural deficiencies in the southern regions of Italy. In contrast to this, intermediate organisations, of the type already highlighted above, are seen to produce strong social norms in northern and central regions which have persisted over time, increasing the level of social capital by socializing individuals into norms of mutual trust and giving them, in turn, the ability to successfully undertake collective endeavours. This process is illustrated by what Leonardi has termed the 'systemic logic of social capital'. What this suggests in practice is that where there is an abundance of

social capital, in this instance based upon continuous co-operation, it can be used as a resource with which to attain desirable outcomes which can be political, social as well as economic in nature. In contrast, in locales where this form of social capital is in short supply a more individualistic approach to the production of goods results.

Lorenz (1993), in his examination of the factors behind the success of industrial districts in Italy, Germany and elsewhere, adopts a similar approach. In this case, the technological dynamism of such districts is attributed to the synergy that exists between co-operation and competition, both among and within firms. The success of these industrial districts is, in part at least, attributable to the operation of a form of social capital, namely the adherence of individuals in the community to norms of reciprocity of the nature already discussed. Varying rates of dynamism in industrial districts are thus ascribed to differing levels of trust among the actors. In Lorenz's conception a central tenet of the co-operative bond in these communities is the manner in which producers adhere to a set of 'norms of competition', similar to the more general 'norms of behaviour' highlighted by both Coleman, Putnam and Leonardi. Reciprocity is seen as central to the technological dynamism of such districts. Initially, this is because it acts as a deterrent to wage competition among firms. Yet it also reduces the risk of investments in new products and processes.

Fukuyama (1995a 1995b), for his part, suggests that differences between types of social capital can have a significant impact upon the industrial structure of a region or country. This view suggests that firms which rely upon social capital based around the familial tie, as is often the case in Third Italy, may have a natural restriction placed upon their growth as a result. Fukuyama (1995b) illustrates this by examining the reasons for differences in industrial structure between countries which are dominated by large-scale private corporations and those which have a predominance of smaller, family owned and managed-businesses, arguing that this is more to do with resources and types of social capital than it is to do with their relative stage of development. He begins by arguing that virtually all economic activity is carried out by organisations which require a high degree of social co-operation, depending upon a prior sense of moral community of the nature described already by Putnam. However, Fukuyama

argues that this 'trust' varies from one society to the next, giving the United States as an example of a society which has historically exhibited a high degree of social trust, represented by a dense network of voluntary associations such as private business organisations and church groups.

He gives his idea further salience by comparing the industrial structure of what he terms a 'high–trust' society , in this case Japan, with a 'low–trust' society, China. In explaining why the industrial structure of capitalist Chinese societies such as Taiwan and Hong Kong are small scale, instead of being dominated by large, professionally managed corporations as in Japan, Fukuyama suggests that the centrality of the family in such societies is responsible. The family, he argues, dominates over all other social obligations and, as a result of this, whilst the level of trust within families and, to a lesser degree, extended kinship groups like lineage's, is high, it comes at the expense of trust between people who are unrelated. This, he suggests, is at the root of the difficulties Chinese companies have in institutionalizing themselves once the founding family is no longer directly involved. In contrast, in Japan, families are smaller and a have limited social significance than is the case in China. In the Japanese instance, group loyalty based around the family has been replaced by loyalty based upon kinship. Fukuyama argues that there is evidence that this picture is replicated wider afield, indeed in the European context he points to the example of Germany, as a 'high-trust' society containing a wide range of intermediate associations, and Italy, where the family still remains the principal form of social capital. He summarises these ideas by suggesting that,

> The character of civil society and its intermediate associations, rooted as it is in nonrational factors like culture, religion, tradition, and other premodern sources, will be key to the success of modern societies in a global economy (p.103).

Yet, Fukuyama (1999) has gone further than other commentators, developing his ideas concerning social capital into a general theory of social order. His conception is that certain sectors of society are biologically driven to establish a form of moral order. This is of a type which reduces the need for constrictive government legislation in the form of laws which sanction against forms of pathological social behaviour and malfeasance. Civil order would

instead be based upon adherence to a set of societal norms. Free from state-based sanction and interference, communities would flourish both socially and economically, benefiting from reduced transaction costs and reinforced by a cooperative culture which reduces negative externalities of crime and social deviance. It is Fukuyama's assertion that a social order close to his model is currently developing in North America. This raises the issue of just how social capital comes into being, as well as the factors which effect its survival.

5. Stocks of social capital: creation and destruction

If social capital can be created through social structures and relations, it can also be depleted and even destroyed by factors which cause the disintegration and breakdown of these relations. This can happen inadvertently though the policy process when communities are uprooted and dispersed, either to make way for a new development or to be rehoused through improvement schemes (Putnam, 1995 p.73). It is ironic that even when this process is well intentioned it can have the adverse effect on a communities and individuals resource of social capital. In North America there has been concern that the 'stock' of social capital has been declining and that this may have adverse effects economically as well as socially. Among the factors blamed for this picture are the technological transformation of leisure and increasing levels of mobility among the population. Conversely, in the United Kingdom, indicators suggest that the stock of social capital is on the increase (Hall, 1997). One of the main reasons in accounting for this has been the increasing access to secondary and higher forms of education, which , it is believed, has produced a greater degree of civic awareness among the general population. This, in turn, has been reflected in a greater degree of participation in voluntary associations, support groups and other mass membership associations.

Coleman (1990) identifies a key factor in this creative and destructive process as the stability of the social structures involved. Another, more debatable, factor he highlights is affluence, or the relative wealth, and resultant need, of a particular community or a society in general:

> The presence of these alternatives allows whatever social capital is generated to depreciate and not be renewed. For despite the public-goods aspect of social capital, the more extensively persons call on one another for aid, the greater will be the quantity of

social capital. When, because of affluence, government aid, or some other factor, persons need each other less, less social capital is generated. (Coleman, 1990 p.321)

Coleman's claim that the presence of these alternatives allows whatever social capital is generated to depreciate and not be renewed is questionable. Government aid is one example he gives of a factor which can reduce people's necessity to call upon one another. Whether this argument is directed towards the notion of a welfare system in uncertain, it could certainly be used in such a way by an apologist for reduced government intervention. Although, it should also be noted that scope still exists for institutional government to play a part in the creation of social capital (Browning, 1997; Per 6, 1997; Putnam, 1993). One such approach highlighted in the literature is tax exemption for neighbourhood and community based groups in order to facilitate a 'thickness' of civic development and increase local networks (Putnam, 1993). Others see a more direct role for government through policies which seek to create socially integrated housing, and employment policies and access to mediums of communications which encourage the development of networks (Browning, 1997; Peri 6, 1997). Opinion, is, however, divided as to the potential for this kind of approach.[3]

6. Limits to 'spatiality' of existing accounts of social capital

This section questions the existing accounts of the spatiality of social capital in a number of ways. Firstly, it focuses upon the issues of interpretation with regard to 'stocks' of social capital in current accounts. In particular, Putnam's implicit assumption that social capital is continuously distributed both horizontally and vertically is challenged. Of particular relevance here are the perceived deficiencies in the representation of social capital in a spatial sense, whether in terms of numbers of groups or through attitudinal surveys which seek to convey differences in regional and national stocks of social capital. In turn, the agency of the concept is also problematised. In particular, the importance of taking into account the manner in which social capital may be complicit in the reproduction of regressive structures of hegemony and

[3] These views range from the pessimistic appraisals that, "The civic community has deep historical roots. This is a depressing observation for those who view institutional reform as a strategy for political change" (1993a p.183) to the more optimistic views of Leonardi (1995). In turn, the work of Wilson (1997) and others (Lauria and Soll, 1996; Newbrough et al, 1997; Catanese, 1996; Meck, 1996; Hanna; 1996) would seem to suggest the considerable utility of social capital as an instrument of policy in pursuing community based development.

exclusion is highlighted (Portes & Landolt, 1996), and, moreover, how this may be geographically expressed.

A key aspect of criticism regarding the work of the advocates of social capital's efficacy as a determinant in democratic forms of governance is the explication of the mechanisms for such a process. Central to this argument is an understanding of the forms and processes which comprise the action and inaction of social capital under certain circumstances and under certain conditions. Returning to Coleman's work suggests the need for a rigorous explication of such mechanisms and forms as trust, reciprocity as well as structures of sanction, in a given social setting, in any rigorous attempt at a utilisation of social capital as a tool for explanation and, indeed, as a prescriptive tool in a variety of social and economic context. Levi (1996) and Fox (1995) agree in their questioning of the conceptual leap made by Putnam, although this could just as easily apply to the work of Fukuyama (1996a; 1996b) and Leonardi (1995), between the existence of micro-units in the form of fraternal associations and sporting clubs, as well as other socially oriented groups, and the engendering of good governance. It is Putnam's failure to elaborate the mechanisms by which this process occurs which lay him, and others, open to accusations of adopting a conceptual tool without maintaining the appropriate degree of academic rigour in it's application which it deserves:

> Participation in soccer clubs, choral groups, and bird-watching societies creates social capital in the form of dense networks of civic engagement, norms of generalized reciprocity, and generalized trust. In the civic communities, individuals become citizens who will act with and trust others, even when they do not know them personally. This may be a description of what is, but it is not a theory that identifies the mechanisms of production, maintenance, and growth of social capital. (Levi, 1996 p.46)

However, this criticism is to question the rigour with which Putnam and others others apply the concept, rather than the validity of their argument. It's failure is that it engenders an element of universality which fails to take into account a more contextual and varied account of the operation of social capital, what can be characterised as a form of 'spatial naivety'. The dangers of this are numerous. Fox (1996), in particular, in his work upon the development of forms of civil society, argues that there may often be overarching social and economic

structures, or hegemonies, ignored by what can be termed the 'Italian' model, which serve to impede the development of social capital:

> For some analysts, the nature of the unit of social capital is not relevant. For Putnam, the micro-units of choral societies and soccer clubs are taken to be indicators of the stock of social capital spread throughout society. This view assumes that social capital is "continuously distributed" both horizontally and vertically. If this assumption were valid, then many of Mexico's poorest regions would be considered to have large stocks of social capital. They are covered with strong horizontal associational webs at the most local level. Yet these are precisely the country's poorest regions, with the worst systems of governance in terms of both society and state. (Fox, 1996 p.1091)

Amin & Thrift (1995), in turn, elaborate upon this weakness when they point to how networks of interaction can be seen as both progressive and regressive in nature, "The socialized economy is neither communitarian nor interested in equity of reward. It continues to exclude, exercise power unequally and represent corporatized interests" (p.59). In fairness this is a point which Putnam, at least, is sensitive to:

> Social inequalities may be embedded in social capital. Norms and networks that serve some groups may obstruct others, particularly if the norms are discriminatory or the networks socially segregated. recognizing the importance of social capital in sustaining community life does not exempt us from the need to worry about how community is defined - who is inside and thus benefits from social capital, and who is outside and who does not. (Putnam, 1993 p.42).

This problem is perhaps most apparent in the work of Leonardi when he points to the dominance of hierarchical associations of southern parts of Italy—particularly those relating to organized crime—as pivotal to the problems the region has had in establishing beneficial forms of local government and patterns of development. However, his prescriptive response, that, by replacing such horizontal networks with vertical networks of association, the social and economic problems of the Southern parts of Italy will be dealt with, fails to address Putnam's point, namely that even horizontal structures can contain inequalities.

This criticism is mirrored by Portes and Landolt (1996) who offer a critique of social capital on a number of fronts, with particular regard to the universally prescriptive nature of the work of

Putnam and Fukuyama. The first point they make is the manner in which group ties often facilitate restrictive and exclusionist practices which prohibit the activities of other groups. They illustrate this with the example of the monopolisation of the construction industry in many American cities by certain migrant groups to the exclusion of others. In turn, they also point to the potential cost of the 'downward levelling pressures' that can exist within a group to conform to norms and expectations, and which can limit an individuals aspirations, reducing the likelihood that they will fulfil their potential. Portes and Landolt argue that the wholly prescriptive nature of much of the work relating to social capital has failed to take these issues into account:

> In Putnam's hands, social capital has become a property of groups and even nations, rather than individuals. Collective social capital, however, cannot simply be the sum of individual social capital. If social capital is a resource available through social networks, the resources that some individuals claim come at the expense of others (Portes and Landolt, 1996 p.19)

A lack of vigorous analytics is also apparent in the use of path dependency as an explanatory tool. This results from Putnam's assertion that despite the fact that both northern and southern Italian regions have at various times since the twelfth century been subject to sustained periods of clientelistic and feudalistic structures, the northern regions have emerged as paradigms of civicness and good governance due to some innate cultural trait:

> The reason for the rigidity of Putnam's reading of the historical record of the Italian regions is that he does not allow that changes in formal institutions may affect institutional performance. From someone claiming to work within a 'neoinstitutionalist' framework, one would expect an analysis of how this change in formal institutions affected the behaviour of the northerners. Instead, Putnam argues that almost three centuries of despotic regime could not obliterate the civic virtues of the inhabitants of the north. (Piattoni, 1994 p.163).

As also pointed out by Levi (1996), historically-given structures and experiences affect choices, but they must continually be reproduced. Moreover, by giving primacy to historical imperatives in the spatial disparities produced between northern and southern Italian regions, Putnam is guilty of adopting a form of historical determinism which ignores the role of social

and political structures in the constant reproduction and destruction of both social capital and forms of governance. The work of Fox (1997) on the political construction of social capital in rural Mexico is particularly relevant in this context:

> Putnam's "societal historical determinist" approach would lead one to expect that these dense horizontal local associational webs would lead to extensive social capital accumulation throughout rural Mexico. If most communities survived with strong inherited stocks of social capital, then this capital should have grown over time through the cycles of "virtuous circles" he posits for Northern Italy. Instead, until very recently most of indigenous Mexico looked more like historical Southern Italy (dominated by vertical, authoritarian power relations). (Fox, 1996 p.1093).

In turn, Fukuyama's (1995a; 1995b) work presents a number of difficulties, some of which mirror the interpretative failings highlighted above. To begin with, there is the issue of how he interprets social capital as , "The component of human capital that allows members of a given society to trust one another and cooperate in the formation of new groups and associations" (p.90). The one-dimensional nature of Fukuyama's definition immediately poses a conceptual dilemma in that he specifically adopts just one element of social capital, namely trust, to be representative of the wide range of forms and functions the concept in fact encapsulates. He than proceeds to use this definition as the descriptive tool with which to account for the varying degrees of success in corporate growth in the United States and Taiwan.

Yet crucially, Fukuyama fails to recognise the multifarious nature of trust. He evokes a definition where the main agency is social in nature, more commonly based in localised networks of regular interaction and generalized reciprocity, however, there are also those based on familial ties and then there are those which are bound in statute through law. Fellmeth (1996) addresses this last point in refuting the importance of social capital in the context of the development of corporations in the United States and Taiwan. Instead, he argues that 'social trust' has made little or no economic impact in the United States and therefore does not explain the Taiwanese pattern. His view is that the rule of law has kept transaction costs low and trust unnecessary in the United States, "The real reason why private businesses have not formed large corporations without state help in Taiwan .[...]. is not a lack of trust but a lack of the rule

of law" (p.153). In fact he goes on to suggest that trust plays no role in any state's economy. Fellmeth perhaps misses the point with the latter, in that what he describes as the rule of law is itself a formalized means of trust. What this points to is perhaps a 'layering' of types and forms of trust. Some of these can be seen as a function of direct relations, whilst others can be seen as adherence to norms of generalized behaviour which are formalized in statute and law.

Between these two poles a range of hybrid forms which are institutionally, as well as culturally context dependent exist. Many of the difficulties with Fukuyama's work can be seen as resulting from the conceptual 'leap' he takes when operationalising Coleman's original concept - based as it was largely upon community oriented social action - to corporate vitality. By suggesting that a high degree of civic engagement in the form of societies and associations encourages Americans to trust each other is not only to generalise in the extreme, but also misses out the meso-structural level in explaining how the micro level of localised community based associations come to affect the macro level of corporate development. In turn, in pointing to the significance of non-rational factors such as culture and tradition in the success of modern societies in a global economy Fukuyama appears to ignore the fact that the crux of Coleman's concept of social action embodied in social capital is a very rational, namely the maximisation of individual utility through group interaction. In relation to this, Fellmeth argues that,

> He [Fukuyama] never seems to entertain the idea that culture, tradition, etc. could indeed be rational in substance under some circumstances or on the whole. Every society's culture and traditions include identifiable patterns of economic behaviour (p. 168).

The third problematic raised by the work of Fukuyama concerns his view that, "The most important factors affecting the real quality of life in such societies lie safely beyond what national governments can affect in positive ways" (p.103). Implicit within Fukuyama's thesis is the hegemony of liberal democracy in tandem with market–based capitalism. Social capital is seen as a tool with which to endorse a view which advocates the erosion of the state in favour of a utopian ideal of civic based democracy, "For while state power can effectively undermine civil society by uprooting neighbourhoods, abolishing communities, and creating perverse

incentives that destabilize two-parent families, it is much less able to promote strong bonds of special solidarity or the moral fabric that underlies community (p.103)". Fukuyama's appropriation of social capital in this manner bears the hallmarks of a form of validation for his own particular 'political turn'. Whilst the work of Putnam and others can be seen as neo-Tocquevellian in its reference to civic institutions and solidarity, this is done whilst still appreciating the importance of national and supra-national levels in the development equation. However, the evidence suggests that Fukuyama's faith in autonomous nodes of development based upon civic solidarity is largely misplaced (Amin & Thrift, 1995a, 1995b). In particular, Amin & Thrift (1995a) suggest that, "...the majority of localities may need to abandon the illusion of the possibility of self-sustaining growth and accept the constraints laid down by the process of increasingly globally integrated industrial development and growth" (p.585).

Fukuyama's (1999) social order thesis, in a similar manner to his previous work, is also open to a degree of criticism. A central concern is the manner in which, once again, social capital is invoked as a tool with which to legitimate rather than elucidate a highly personalised agenda. His vision is a peculiarly North American one, one in which state apparatus is largely seen in negative light and one in which the individual can only be set free to realise their full potential when unfettered from the constricts of government. Furthermore, Fukuyama's notion of biological determinism appears dangerously close to a form of Darwinian selectivity, with dubious connertations regarding issues of equality based upon wealth, gender and race. As previously suggested in this chapter, social capital should be seen as imbedded within social structures and relations, not specific cultures or sectors of society. Fukuyama's thesis moves social capital towards being a tool for the 'haves' rather than the 'have not's'. Others would question such an emphasis vigorously, particularly the notion that social capital should be seen as the antithesis of state-apparatus (Browning, 1997; Hall, 1997; Leadbeater, 1996; Peri 6, 1999).

7. Addressing the limitations: the need for 'new' accounts

Many of the interpretative failings of Putnam and others could be argued to find their resolution in the application of social capital within the field of community economic

development. Practitioners in this area have become increasingly aware of the value of the concept, particularly in relation to small and intermediate-scale group based projects aimed at creating a functional civil society in areas which could most benefit from such a process (Wilson, 1997; Lauria and Soll, 1996; Newbrough et al, 1997; Catanese, 1996; Meck, 1996; Hanna, 1994).

This new approach is based upon a sensitivity to the contextual variances which characterise particular locations and, hence, define any course of remedial action. In this process, the development professional is seen largely as an agent of change or a facilitator, who can utilise a number of tools in what Wilson (1997) describes as an 'iterative' process. As well as group learning and the development of group process skills, participatory action research is utilised to promote group awareness and potential in order to facilitate mutual action towards desired goals, usually involving small-scale development projects. In turn, social capital has also been utilised as an evaluative tool in the success of grass-roots development projects in order to gauge what are termed the 'intangibles', such as group development and participation (Ritchey-Vance, 1996). Two factors are particularly relevant here in the context of this discussion. the first of these relates to how social capital used in this manner can be seen to be non-prescriptive in contrast to Putnam's work. The second factor concerns the spatiality of social capital and concerns how the work of Wilson and others illustrates how a spatial interpretation of social capital must also be a contextual or 'qualitative' one.

8. Summary

This chapter began by introducing the concept of social capital, seen as having emerged as part of the socioeconomic approach developed by Granovetter and others (Lin, 1981,1982; Loury, 1977). What the term actually represents are the social forms and structures which can be seen as advantageous in some way to those who participate within, or utilse, them. Among such forms were seen to be trust, obligations, ideology and reciprocal relationships. Following from this, the spatiality of social capital was explored. The definition of distinct 'places' or locations, where social capital tends to develop was a first element in this. In turn, it was suggested that the development of trust and other forms may benefit from geographically

defined relations of proximity in tandem with a common bond or focus. Another aspect of this spatiality was seen through the interpretations of Putnam and others (Fukuyama, 1995,1999; Leonardi, 1995). It was argued that these accounts were limited in a number of respects. Characteristic of these was a failure to isolate the mechanisms of social capital, as an active outcome of various social structures and modes of interaction, and in particular why these outcomes differ spatially. Put simply, what this refers to is why a particular form of social capital operates in one locale and not in another, what the catalysts are in this process and through what mechanisms is it reproduced and, in turn, denuded. The work of Fox (1996) in particular, highlights the need for a contextualisation of social capital beyond the discrete boundaries used by Putnam to gain a greater understanding of these processes. Rather than merely giving lip-service to social capital this suggests that any empirical study of these processes must be sensitive to the contextual aspect. A spatial understanding of social capital is key not only to any understanding of how transferable its benefits are, but also why it develops in the first place.

The second major theme can be seen as complementary to this aim and concerns the nature of the apparent inter-relation that exists between social and other forms of capital, whether they be culturally, financially, ethnically based or on human capital (Coleman, 1988; 1990; Teachman et al, 1996; Sanders & Nee, 1996) . What this seems to suggests is that rather than being a vital precursor to the development of either social, human or financial capital, each of these types exist in a symbiotic role whereby the relationships are often reversed and made unclear. On example of this relationship is apparent through Coleman's work on the influence of human capital in the family upon school outcomes of siblings. However, it is also apparent that a deficiency in human and financial capital can be mitigated by community structures which act to serve the needs of individuals. Yet another theme concerns the extent to which different forms of social capital interact with one another. Also important here is the degree to which forms and networks of social capital can be seen to be inclusive or exclusive in nature, who benefits and who doesn't (Portes & Landolt, 1996). With these questions in mind, the

following section extrapolates the forms and structures discussed in this chapter and interprets them in relation to one particular institution in civil society, namely the Catholic Church.

Chapter 3: The Catholic Church and Social Capital

1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the boundaries of the notion of social capital in both a practical and conceptual sense. This chapter seeks to develop some of the issues that emerged through this discussion in relation to a specific example, that of the Catholic Church. The purpose of this chapter is to not only validate the Church as both a singular and valuable opportunity for empirical investigation with regard to the role and nature of social capital, but also to clarify the spatiality of these processes and the range of social issues significant within this context. The first part of this appraisal involves relating the structures and forms designated by Coleman (1988,1990) and others (Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 1993) discussed in Chapter Two to the example of the Catholic Church. The second element of this process involves developing the significance of a sense of the 'spatial' in the Church's application of these forms and structures in relation to social capital. This involves looking at how the Church is characterised by a variety of social structures which are spatially defined. An overview of the Catholic Church within civil society places these processes in a more tangible context. In summarising this discussion it is suggested that a spatial 'cleavage' exists between the formal and informal structures which the Church operates as a response to social issues and that this is reflected in both the nature and appropriateness of this response.

2.. Catholic social teaching as ideology

In the last chapter social capital was seen to be represented by a number of forms and structures. Among these forms were, ideology, social interaction and social structures (Coleman, 1989;1991). The primary aim of this chapter is to relate these specific forms to the Catholic Church's approach to social issues whilst also expanding upon the spatiality of these processes. The second part of this process is a direct response to Putnam's (1993) query regarding the reasons why resources of social capital are seen to vary from place to place. Ideology is one form of social capital which could be interpreted as having some influence

over the development of a type of social capital which was distinctly Catholic in nature. Ideology is significant in the formation of social capital when it encourages or induces people to act not in their own self-interest but instead look to the needs and interests of others.

Coleman (1988,1990) describes this process as the 'public goods' aspect of social capital. Such an approach may be in adherence to a particular value or belief system which may contain a more 'progressive' – in a social sense – doctrine of behaviour and concern for the well-being of others in society. Examples of such behaviour could include participation in unpaid voluntary work for a cause an individual felt strongly about, or the provision of a service to the local community requiring both time and effort on the part of an individual. In such cases the concerned individuals would rarely gain any tangible benefits from their activity, these being more intrinsic in nature. Religious ideology often contains such an element, one example of this form being Catholic Social Teaching (or CST), a Christian based ideology of social order which in many respects is similar to more conventional models of society, whether these are based on a neo-classical or post-structural perspective. Just like these it forms a model of societal structures and modes of action and interaction, albeit based on a distinctly Christian interpretation. In a more tangible sense the application of these beliefs can play a part in the development of social capital. Coleman (1989;1991) argues this point when commenting on how social capital is formed in religious communities:

> This depends in part on the social-structural connections between school and parents, through the religious community. In part, however, it depends on the precept derived from religious doctrine that every individual is important in the eyes of God. (Coleman, 1991 p.320-321).

CST can play a part in the development of social capital by encouraging those who subscribe to its teachings to act for the benefit of others. However, CST is subject to a varied interpretation. These range from the liberatory theologies of Gutiérrez (1984,1993), Boff (1985) and Berryman (1987) to the democratic communitarianism of William's (1993) and the right-wing polemic of Wolfe (1996). Yet despite this, at the basis of this doctrine are a set of enduring principles, central themes which are at the core of the ideology. These include the notions of Subsidiarity and Solidarity and what is termed the 'preferential option for the poor', all of

which can be interpreted as having distinctly spatial implications for the Church's response to social issues:

> Subsidiarity is a way to peace and development. Solidarity amongst the poor involves public demonstration of mutual support and of resistance to inefficient or corrupt government but with recourse to violence. The Church's preferential option for the poor is a demonstration of solidarity which is not blind or exclusive, but discerning and mindful of the common good. (Coote, p.157-158 1989).

In a more tangible sense, within CST the notion of subsidiarity can be seen as an attempt to interpret both structural forms and the various levels, in a spatial sense, at which human activity takes place. Central to this is the belief that certain tiers of society are more appropriate for undertaking certain activities. For its part solidarity introduces the notion of communality and the perceived benefits of such an approach in respect to the functioning of society. Community in this sense is expressed as a mutual affinity for the good of the whole. This interpretation may be expressed at the basic level of local communities such as within parishes or in the national or even in a global sense.

However, CST has also been criticised on a number of fronts (Green, 1993; Hall and Rogers, 1993; Prakesh-Sethi, 1993; Pryor, 1991). Its limited ethnocentric viewpoint in particular has come in for a degree of criticism (Hall and Rogers, 1993; Prakesh-Sethi, 1993). In turn, one of the chief problems with the doctrine is its prescriptive vagueness or its lack of specific guidelines for action when addressing social issues. The leap from the abstract to the tangible is a problematic one in CST. These problems could be seen as affecting its usefulness as a doctrine of action or as a tangible tool to be applied in addressing social issues. This is largely due to the relatively general nature of notions such as subsidiarity which, as seen already, lay them open to a wide interpretation. However it could also be argued that this lack of rigidity in the doctrine's focus could be as much an attribute as it is a hindrance. Such an interpretation is made by O'Brien and Shannon (1992) who make a call for spatial 'determinism' with regards to the Church's response to social issues:

> It remains for the local churches of the world to examine the situations of their own countries and regions, reflect on that situation in light of the gospel and the teaching of

the church, and develop their own conclusions and directions for action. (O'Brien and Shannon, 1992 p.5).

CST is significant in a spatial sense because it has been subject to a varied interpretation and hence implementation. In this way it is contextually specific to a given locale whether that be a parish or national church body. CST represents a specific 'ideology of the social' which can play a role in the formation of social capital by encouraging its advocates to act for the benefit of others. However, as Chapter 2 highlighted, ideology represents only one form of social capital. The following section relates Coleman's interpretation of the role of social structures in the formation of social capital to the structures used by the Catholic Church in response to social need. Once again there is seen to be a distinct spatial dimension to this process.

3. The Spatiality of social structures

The influence of social structures upon the Church's resource of social capital is particularly pertinent because it is reliant upon certain stable social constructs to perform such a role. At a variety of spatial levels, from the diocese to the parish, these structures provide the context for the development and initiation of a range of social relations and interactions which can, using Coleman's interpretation, engender the creation of trust, reciprocity, the awareness of need, norms of behaviour and in the creation of networks. In turn, these structures can be seen as characterising the nature of the Church's response to social need at a spatial level. Figure 2 illustrates both the levels of activity, vertical and horizontal, and the processes that each tier is characterised by. At the regional level there exist a range of bodies and agencies which address social need at the diocesan level. The activity within this structural tier is largely characterised by a co-ordinating function but also involves the provision of services. The extent to which these functions depend upon social capital is likely to be limited although not insignificant. This is

largely due to the formal nature of the activity particularly in relation to the role of waged labour and its implications for the actions of individuals involved in these structures. Another factor is the importance of proximity in the creation of certain forms of social capital which allow the development of structures through concerted interaction between individuals. There

is unlikely to be the scope for such activity at the more abstracted levels of the Church's structure. Above the regional is what is termed the national tier of the Church structure. The activities at this level are largely confined to co-ordinating and policy interpretation. More so than at the regional tier, forms of social capital are less likely to play a role here except possibly in the form of ideology.

As Figure 2 indicates, the lowest tier of the Church's structure is represented by the parish. The parish can be defined in a number of ways. The first of these is in a territorial or geographical sense. It can also be defined as a sociological construct, which may have both formal or institutionalized aspects, as well as those which may be more informal. Then, in turn, there is also what can be termed the 'symbolic' parish, or the parish seen in a more abstract sense as Christian community. Of course it is possible that all of these interpretations exist within one parish but in practice it is likely that some degree of differentiation may be apparent. The first aspect, the territorial, is a juridical concept defined by Canon law and represents a geographic entity with distinct boundaries. Thus, "A parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor." (Can. 515 s.1).

The significance of the parish in relation to social capital is that, unlike the other structures of the Church, this tier of activity can provide the framework of social relations and inter-relationships which are vital to its generation. They may also be characterised by a high degree of intergenerational closure, of the nature discussed in Chapter Two in relation to Coleman's work. The religious bond may also be analogous to more innate familial and communal bonds such as trust, reciprocity and mutual norms and objectives, thus engendering both protracted and concerted interaction between those affiliated to the religious parish, as distinct from other groups or individuals who, although they may interact to some extent, remain separate and 'apart' from this community. There exists a potential 'networking' function to the parish which although possibly related to, could also be seen as distinct from, its overtly religious function, being more representative of community in a sociological sense. However, as already discussed, the role of the religious – particularly through when inspired by social doctrines

such as CST – cannot be excluded and may interact with more overtly social aspects to develop forms of social capital. The extent to which Coleman's ideal-type 'religious community' is the norm as opposed to the exception is one of the chief components of this study and as such is explored in detail in later sections. Using Bourdieu's (1996) more general interpretation, these structures could prove advantageous in increasing opportunities for the members of such communities, in this case the members of the parish, whether these are sociologically or geographically defined.

Other more formalized networks may sometimes operate in tandem with the parish structure or be partially integrated either by virtue of proximity or affiliation. Examples of these are institutions such as religiously affiliated schools, hospitals or residential care centres. The extent to which these institutions would have a social capital function would probably vary to a large degree and a distinction would have to be made between activities that were undertaken on an informal and voluntary 'public goods' basis and those undertaken as part of an individual's activities when they were more representative of a waged labour relationship.

4. Sociology of the parish priest and other parish actors

Given the centrality of certain actors within this system, the parish priest, parish sisters and lay activists[1], it is important to examine in some detail the extent and nature of their roles within the parish. These actors can be seen as interacting with the wider community of parishioners but have particular significance due to their explicit range of functions within the parish. In particular, this section attempts to illustrate the numerous factors which can be seen as defining the sociology of the parish priest. A threefold definition is suggested in respect of this. This includes his role as a 'gatekeeper' to information within his parish. In turn there is his formalized role in the spiritual ministry of his parishioners. Then there is also his less formal role in the development of what can be termed a 'social ministry' within his parish.

[1] Larger parishes often contain one or more assistant priests, as well as parish sisters, who are usually associated with a local convent, and work in the local community in much the same way as a social worker

The priest's role within his parish is formalized in the Canon Law of the Church. The fundamental purpose of the Catholic cleric in his parish is to provide for the spiritual ministry and sacramental needs of his parishioners, and this involves the execution of a number of functions and ceremonies which largely fall outside of the realm of social and material welfare concerns. These ultimately form the core function of the priest in an institutionalized sense and represent his primary concern within the parish :

> The parish priest has the obligation of ensuring that the word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish. He is therefore to see to it that the lay members of Christ's faithful are instructed in the truths of faith, especially by means of the homily on Sundays and holy days of obligation and by catechetical formation. He is to foster works which promote the spirit of the Gospel, including its relevance to social justice. He is to have a special care for the Catholic education of children and young people. (Can. 528 s.1).

In addition, the priest is also expected to act as a counsel to the spiritual needs of his parishioners by visiting them in their homes. What has to be borne in mind is that this is very much an 'ideal-type' view of parish sociology. The notion of the priest as 'gatekeeper' or, as Hornsby-Smith terms an 'adjudicator' of what enters or leaves the parish, (for example, as in types of liturgical or pastoral practices and priorities), suggests that as an individual he maintains a high degree of control over the activities and direction of parishioner involvement within his parish:

> This is partly because he often has a near-monopoly over both access to information, for example new pastoral messages from the bishop or statements published by the Vatican, and the paths for its dissemination within the parish, by such means as open meetings and discussions or making available relevant papers or reports. (Hornsby-Smith, 1991 p.115).

The third aspect of the role of the cleric is in the social ministry of his parish. Although some guidance is given to clerics the Church's Canon Law provides only an indication of what is expected in respect of this function on the part of the priest. As a result this role can be seen as less formalised than the others. The extent to which the cleric attempts to both socialise his own role within his parish and develop its communal aspects becomes largely a matter of

individual approach. Since the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has encouraged its priests to develop a more integrative and participation based ministry within their parishes. The nature of the interaction between individual priests and their parishioners is also important in this process:

> On occasion a charismatic progressive priest has been able to drag a more-or-less reluctant parish towards a post-Vatican model. In this he might have been aided by the crucial support of a committed group of progressive activist laity. On other occasions he might have had to struggle against a strategy of resistance and downright sabotage on the part of an obstinate and entrenched laity. (Hornsby-Smith, 1991 p.116).

As this indicates, the pivotal role of the priest can be supplemented by a number of other actors within the parish who fulfil a range of functions which may relate to the social as well as sacred aspects of the church's ministry. For instance, a parish may have a parish sister whose role is to visit the elderly and sick within a community. It may also contain lay ministers whose role is chiefly religious in nature, aiding the priest during services and ceremonies. In turn, there may be more general lay or parish activists who fulfil a largely social function within the parish. These actors are generally voluntary in nature and are drawn from the pool of parishioners. The extent to which these actors are active in a given parish as well as the nature of the activities they perform is one of the key aspects of this thesis and as such is explored in more detail subsequently. It is sufficient to say at this point is that formalized structures of action may be supplemented by more informalized structures which are a response to a range of contextual factors. The following section attempts to place these processes and their significance in a broader more tangible context by examining the place of the Catholic Church in civil society.

4. The Catholic Church in civil society

This section attempts to place the structures discussed in the previous section in a more applied context and to illustrate their significance, both potential and realised, in relation to social capital and its role in the activities of the Church. This role has already been characterised as a particular range of social structures, the geographically defined inter-relationships these can facilitate and the influence of ideology on these processes. This section examines the nature of

the Catholic Church's involvement in civil society in a variety of context through the work of Fox (1997) and others (Beyer, 1996; Casanova, 1994; Putnam, 1993a,1993b). Casanova's (1994) suggestion that a paradigm shift is taking place in the Church away from a state-oriented to a civil society-oriented model is also discussed. It is argued in this context that the social capital resource of the Catholic Church has gained renewed significance.

Contributions in the area of the Catholic church's role in civil society have tended to concentrate upon its sociopolitical function in democratic movements particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe (Cahalen, 1994; Fox, 1997; Froehle, 1994; Gonzalez & Gabriel, 1991; Osa, 1995). Fox (1997), in particular, draws together the three elements of social capital, civil society and the role of actors such as the Catholic Church in an attempt to provide a description of the processes involved in what he terms the 'thickening' of civil society as part of the democratisation process in Mexico. He argues that a number of strategies can be seen as operating to increase the civil function of a society and these involve both internal and external actors. The key aspect in this process is the utilisation of a range of different micro- as well as larger networks which have a social capital function. However, unlike Putnam who would see the existence of such groups as direct indicators of social capital, Fox argues that in the context of a democratising state, such networks do not have this opportunity as an automatic right. They are instead subject to the control and limitations imposed by the state apparatus. Seen another way this suggests the significance of active as opposed to latent forms of social capital. Among the key actors highlighted by Fox in the context of social capital development in Mexico was the Catholic church. Its impact was in the form of the base community groups it created in the poorer regions which provided safe opportunities for people to meet and learn the skills which they needed in order to mobilise.

Gonzalez & Gabriel (1991) also highlight how the Catholic Church in Mexico has assumed an increasingly significant role in the process of mobilization in particular with regard to the development of organisations related to political aims and objectives. As a consequence of such activity the Church has gained considerable influence over vast sectors of Mexican civil society. In fact throughout Latin America the Church has traditionally been a major actor in the

civil realm, particularly in respect to encouraging the development of social movements against repressive regimes. In countries such as Brazil it has also been active in a range of social work schemes as well as providing financial and social support to oppressed urban and rural communities (Shagrir, 1991). Another high profile example of the Church's action in this capacity is the role it played in the mobilization process which contributed to the emergence of the Solidarity movement in Poland. Not only did this ultimately lead to the democratisation process in this context but the Church continues to be one of the key actors in civil society after the democratisation process began and as a result is active in the renegotiation of democratic forms and structures in Poland (Osa, 1995).

Whilst the Church's civil activities in other context may not be so overtly political as in the emerging democracies, they too present a set of issues for the Church to respond to. As McDougall (1988) and others (Coleman, 1988, 1991; Putnam, 1993; Hornsby-Smith, 1989, 1991) suggest outside of what could be termed the emerging or developing democracies of Latin America and Eastern Europe, this role maintains a largely socioeconomic function in deprived communities. This consists of the provision of financial assistance, counselling and practical help through a range of localised instruments, groups and associations. However this does not preclude the Church's participation in a more overtly sociopolitical manner in this context. Indeed, Putnam's thesis is explicit in relating notions such as civic community and the process of civic engagement and their impact upon the creation of social capital, to democratic forms of governance. As seen in the previous chapter, this 'thickness' of social capital is seen to be produced by a web of clubs, fraternities and associations which have social, trading, sporting as well as religious functions, but which also have the effect of increasing effective forms of governance by engendering a sense of community and mutual trust amongst their members.

The Church's participation in civil society can also be seen to differ in both extent and nature depending upon contextual differences where it is operating. A distinction can be made between a national context where the Catholic church has traditionally played a significant role in all aspects of civil society and one where this role may be less political in nature and the

Church less vocal. Where Catholicism represents the civil religious function of the state, such a role is likely to be both greater in extent and of a diverse nature. This may include wide scale involvement in welfare and health care provision as well as political lobbying. This model of Church and State relations appears to be akin to the position in Ireland, as the following indicates:

> In fact, the only great corporate institution in the community that might seem to rival the institutions of the political system is the Catholic church. As a pressure group it has had, and to an extent continues to have, a unique position. (Chubb, 1992 p.116).

In the UK by contrast, Anglicanism is the state religion and Catholicism represents only one of a diverse range of religions, albeit the second largest Christian population. The process of secularisation is also important here. Within most societies organised religion is increasingly seen as another group in the mix of actors who participate in civil society, rather than as state-oriented institutions, and despite what the above suggests, this is as true for a country like Ireland as for the UK and further afield. This raise an interesting issue, namely the differences in nature and extent of approaches between a national context which was predominantly Catholic and one in which the Church's role was defined by being part of a diverse range of organised churches. In the context of the UK the Church draws its significance in a social sense from being an actor in the increasingly diverse economy of social care and welfare provision, part of both the informal and voluntary sectors which are gaining increasing importance in the context of structural changes (Oppenheim, 1997). However, the Church's function in civil society can also be more overtly sociopolitical in nature. Through lobbying groups such as the Catholic Agency for Social Concern (CASC) this process of bringing 'new issues' and values is increasingly in the realm of the Catholic church in the UK as it has traditionally been in the case of Ireland.

Whatever context it is seen in, it is possible to view the Church's involvement in civil society in a number of ways. It could, for instance, be seen as a response to perceived political and social changes in a variety of context. Alternately, it may be that the Church is engaged in a process of legitimisation in terms of its role, as a response to increasing secularisation, and that greater participation in the civil realm is part of its strategy. To some degree both of these

interpretations are probably true, the emphasis depending upon the particular context. However, the notion that the Church's role in such a manner is characterised by a degree of transience, that it could be seen as changing to respond not only to societal but also global factors, is one worth developing briefly. Indeed it has been suggested that the ongoing processes of globalization offer a 'transnational religious regime' like Catholicism unique opportunities to adapt to the newly emerging global system and to assume a proactive role in shaping it and that the Church's response to this has been characterised by a major transformation in its political orientation, from a state-centred to a civil society-oriented strategy (Casanova, 1996):

> If the church today no longer seeks to renter the state through the mobilization of the laity in order to regain control over society, it is to a large extent due to the fact that the church no longer feels threatened by a hostile secular state or by hostile secular movements. The disappearance of anticlericalism from every-day politics in Catholic countries is perhaps the most telling indicator of this historical transformation. (Casanova, 1996 p.367).

This view is shared by Beyer (1995), who suggests that the functional characteristics of religion make it an area of 'human endeavour' where an attempt can be made to gauge whether we are experiencing the emergence of a new world order based upon a resurgent capitalism. His ideas develop in the context of the wider work on the globalization thesis (Luhmann, 1971; Robertson, 1992; Wallerstein, 1976). In relation to this he points to shifts in the critique of the global system by religious leaders, arguing that if such a shift were apparent it could be seen as indicative of a seed-change in opinion and approach given that previous global phases have been accompanied by just such a response from religious elite's. Beyer put his hypothesis to the test by undertaking a qualitative content analysis of public documents issued by the Canadian liberal religious elites, including the Catholic church, in order to assess its attitudes towards social justice and related issues.

What this analysis revealed was that in the period between the late 1960s to the early 1970s the liberal Church's concern for issues of social justice was pronounced This is unsurprising considering this was also the period in which the Second Vatican Council had advocated the

'preferential option for the poor'. In turn, between the early 1970's and the early 1980's the statements coming from the Canadian church adopted a more radical tone, criticising issues such as the functioning of the global economic order and making general condemnations of the capitalist system. Beyer, in turn, argues that the period since the late 1980's has been characterised by a great deal of uncertainty over the issues that should be addressed by the Church and suggests that this lack of a coherent discourse may be a response to the emergence of a new phase in the globalization process. The section below attempts to draw the issues discussed in this chapter together and in so doing develop a framework for empirical investigation.

10. Summary

Whereas Chapter Two defined the main issues concerning the notion of social capital this chapter has attempted to place these in an investigative framework. With this in mind the Catholic Church was introduced as a valuable context within which to examine these issues. This was for a number of reasons. The Catholic Church is characterised by forms and social structures which are central to the generation of social capital. The doctrine of Catholic Social Teaching was seen as a social oriented ideology which was concerned with social need and imbalance in the distribution of wealth. The Church's response to social and welfare need was also seen to be characterised by social structures which possess the potential to generate social capital. These structures were also seen as spatially distinct from one another, comprising three separate tiers of activity. The social forms which characterised each level were seen as defining the nature of activity with of these each structural tier. It was argued that a spatial cleavage exists between the Church's role between the non-profit sector of relatively explicit welfare provision at diocesan level and the informal sector of the parish, which is localised in nature, and relies upon networks and structures of social relations. As well as a vertical spatial pattern it was suggested that the activity could be variegated within each tier, that is horizontally.

In this way the Church's structures were seen as providing a relatively uniform, comparable context for assessing the nature of social capital within social structures. The relevance of these forms and structures was then placed in the wider context of the Church's role in civil society.

An important distinction was made between a national context where the Church was representative of the civil religious function and instances where this was not the case. It was suggested that such a difference in context may play an important role in how the Church operated a social capital function, affecting both its extent and nature. Casanova's view of an increasingly civil-society oriented Catholic Church added further pertinence to the issue of the Church and its social capital function by posing the question of the limitations of such a project in the context of the role of social capital. Chapter 4 which follows attempts to give these ideas and concepts an even more tangible form. The first way in which it does this is by defining the spatiality of the Catholic Church's response of social need in both the UK and Ireland. Following from this it examines the Church's rhetorical and practical response to the issue of social exclusion asking the questions 'how is the Church addressing this issue?' 'what role can, and does, social capital play in this process?' And 'is there a spatial dimension to these processes?'

Chapter 4: Social Capital, the Catholic Church and the 'Third Way'

1. Introduction

Whilst the previous chapter sought to place emphasis upon the potential of the Catholic Church's structures and actors to generate social capital, this chapter attempts to give such a function a more tangible context within contemporary concerns and debates. To this end, it is divided into a number of sections. The first of these describes the spatiality of Church structures in both the UK and Ireland, providing illustrative examples of the functions undertaken at each respective level. Following a theme of the previous chapter, it is also suggested that a spatial divide exists between the formalised and informal activities undertaken at each of these levels. Moreover, that the more informal the activities, the more 'fixed' spatially they become. In turn, the relevance of this factor is placed in the context of the Church's representation upon the Labour Governments Social Exclusion Unit. This multi-departmental body includes actors drawn from civil society and is seen as having emerged in response to Gidden's (1999) call for a 'third way' in politics in the UK.

For their part, both terms, social exclusion and social capital, are seen as having emerged in dialectical opposition, one seen as the cure-all for the other. Yet, a spatial understanding of these processes, it is suggested, could be crucial in this process. Furthermore, at is argued that the Catholic Church may possess a number of advantages over other 'civil' actors with regard to the application of social capital in such a capacity. The reasons for this are then outlined and a number of illustrative examples highlighted. For instance, the manner in which credit unions and other parish-based networks can mitigate the symptoms of social exclusion. The final section summarises the main issues arising from this and previous chapters, suggesting that, together, this body of work poses a number of pertinent questions. An empirical framework

within which to address these questions is then suggested to provide the context for the empirical study that follows.

2. Spatiality of the Church's function in the UK and Ireland

This section attempts to give some contemporary resonance to the issues discussed so far by examining the differences between the spatial levels of the Church's activities in civil society in terms of both forms and functions. These are represented by three distinct levels of activity, the national, the diocesan and the parish. In turn, this division is far from perfunctory, but rather representative of distinct forms and functions, many of which it is contended, are specific to their spatial context and thus geographically fixed. This has a number of implications for the nature and extent of the Church's ameliorative role in relation to issues such as social exclusion. At each level an illustrative example of the type and nature of these functions is given, this is not meant to be an exhaustive process but rather give an impression of how the Church functions in such a capacity in both the UK and Ireland.

At the national scale, in the context of Ireland more so than the UK, the Church maintains a variety of centrally based organisations performing a wide range of functions. Among these are the Central Council of Catholic Adoption Societies, the Young Christian Workers Society, the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland, the Catholic Young Men's Society of Ireland, the National Chaplaincy for Deaf People and the Society of St.Vincent de Paul among numerous others, these often acting as co-ordinating bodies to both regional and local groups. Although in the UK a national capacity is less evident the Church does maintain a number of centrally based organisations including Justice and Peace and Young Catholic Workers Societies as well as St Cecilia's Guild for the Blind. In turn, the recent formation of the Catholic Agency for Social Concern which has a mandate to tackle problems such as social exclusion through the Church apparatus suggests that a degree of vigour at this level does exist in the UK. The role of most of these bodies remains largely confined to a co-ordinating capacity, offering assistance to more localised groups and providing a national expression of their work.

As well as maintaining affiliated branches of national agencies such as the St.Vincent de Paul Society and the Union of Catholic Mothers, in both the UK and Ireland, each diocese maintains a range of groups and societies of their own which aim to tackle a range of problems, among these being lone parents, the homeless, those suffering from alcohol and drug dependency as well as other needy groups. In the case of England and Wales the diocesan level of Church activity is represented by eighteen welfare agencies, in which around 1,500 people are involved in running (Danson, 1997). These agencies are intended to offer a diverse range of services and fulfil a number of functions not only for the relevant Catholic populations but also the wider community. Although in the case of the latter, there is little evidence to suggest the extent to which this occurs in practice.

In turn, the Church also provides a range of counselling services which have both a national and diocesan base. Among these are the Catholic Housing Aid Society (CHAS), with ten branches throughout England and Wales, Catholic Marriage Care, with around seventy centres in England and Wales, and the Bourne Trust, which is concerned with the provision of counselling to prisoners and their families (Danson, 1997). It is also important to note that whilst a civil function of this nature for the Church has and remains to a large extent ubiquitous in the context of Ireland, it often being seen as synonymous with social care and a welfare function, in the case of the UK these functions are less evident and geographically they tend to be concentrated where a 'critical mass' of Catholic population is evident such as the south east and the midlands around the larger cities where there has historically been a significant immigrant population, Irish or otherwise, who have been Catholic. This is not to dilute the significance of the Church in the UK but rather to frame the context in which it operates in either country.

In addition to diocesan organisations there are parish based groups and societies in both the UK and Ireland which, whilst in many cases being affiliated to a diocesan based organisation, are largely autonomous. Among such groups are the Legion of Mary, the Catholic Mothers Society, mother and toddler clubs, credit unions and other groups and organisations with a wide range of functions oriented towards the social and economic needs of the relevant

communities. An example of this being parish based Justice and Peace groups, the role of which is to campaign on issues of both domestic and overseas social justice. In turn, the role of the St Vincent de Paul groups, whose members number over 18,000 in England and Wales, is to visit the disadvantaged in their parishes, providing moral, emotional support as well as occasional financial assistance.

The very informality of many of these activities means that their geography is vague. More significantly, the contextual factors which define this geography are not defined, as seen later this is particularly significant given their potential impact upon social exclusion. A second factor here is that many of the functions performed by the Church at this level could be seen as spatially dependent, that is they are reliant upon certain forms and scales of association, often involving trust and a frequency of interaction, which are usually only able to manifest in social structures the size and scale of the parish. The very immediacy of the parish to the social and economic realities of their constituent communities, and not just those which are explicitly Catholic in composition, their flexibility in tandem with their capacity to draw upon a host of structures and relations as a resource in tackling its problems, sets it apart as the spatial interface between the Church and its practical response to social exclusion. Whilst still possessing a considerable ameliorative impact upon problems of poverty, homelessness and drug dependency, the formalized diocesan level, as the national, is relatively rigid and often representative of a co-ordinating function, lacking the social structures necessary for a concerted and direct impact upon problems evident in many parishes.

Another significant aspect of civil society in which the Church is active at the parish level in a formalized sense is that of education, the significance of which should be considered in light of Coleman's (1988;1989; 1990) work upon the potential role of associated social structures in the production of social capital through informalized functions. In both the UK and Ireland the Catholic church maintains a significant number of educational establishments, both primary and secondary, comprising a combination of comprehensive, independent and special schools. In the Irish context for example, the Church is responsible for 3,604 primary and 842 secondary schools, representing a school population of around 403,108 and 244,158

respectively. In the case of England and Wales, the Catholic Church maintains a total of 2,438 schools serving around 809,048 pupils. Whilst the relative significance of the Church in this capacity can be seen as much greater in Ireland, these figures illustrate that it also maintains a highly significant function in this capacity in England and Wales. At this point it may prove useful to summarise the spatial characteristics of the Church's activities as outlined so far:

1) At the national level, the Church maintains a significant presence in the context of Ireland with a wide range of agencies related to welfare and social care functions. In the case of the UK, whilst this function is less evident, due both to the relatively small Catholic population and its restriction to certain cities and regions, the Church still maintains a capacity at this level, most notably the recently formed Catholic Agency for Social Concern. The activities at this level are characterised largely by a co-ordinating function with regard to the lower tiers of activity.

2) Then there is the Diocesan level of agencies, the institutions of which are largely characterised by formalized structures and roles which have a specific function in the provision of care and welfare usually on a city-wide basis. As already suggested, the significance of social capital at this level is probably limited given the fact that the structures which may engender trust, co-operation, awareness of mutual need, such as proximity in tandem with frequent and sustained interaction of a geographically or sociologically defined community, are not in place. However, this does not preclude the possible significance of an individual's commitment to the 'public good'.

3) The third level of activity, that which takes place within the parish, is defined by a high degree of informal activity within both formalized and informalized structures. Unlike the diocesan level, frequent interaction can be engendered due to proximity which may give rise to the development of a social capital function characterised by reciprocal relationships based upon an awareness of the communities needs and a willingness to address these through the creation of micro-networks.

What this points to is the existence of a spatial cleavage between, on the one hand, the Church's role in the non-profit sector of relatively explicit welfare provision at diocesan level and, on the

other, the informal function of the parish, which is localised in nature, reliant upon networks and structures of social relations. In turn, at this spatial level the Church's role is concerned with welfare in the traditional sense but also includes a range of groups and clubs with a variety of functions which may be responses to needs or more functional factors and are dependent upon community and thus can be seen as spatially fixed by these structures. The implications of this factor are discussed in the remainder of this chapter. A central theme here is the problem of social exclusion, both its multi-faceted and spatial nature. The following section charts the nature and geography of this phenomena.

3. Social exclusion: a multifaceted problem

The Church's role as defined above cannot be seen as static in nature but rather as transient and responsive to the wider needs and mores of a given society and, so it follows, to the dominant social and economic patterns experienced in such a context as indeed Beyer (1991) has suggested, these trends being reflected to some degree in its own responses. With this in mind, this section addresses a dominant theme of social and welfare provision, namely social exclusion, and questions the nature and extent of the Church's response particularly in the context of the UK and Ireland. For its part, the concept of social exclusion has entered the dialogue concerning the emergence of groups and sectors in society which increasingly find themselves socially, economically and even culturally excluded from the mainstream of employment, leisure, education and other societal functions (Lash, 1994; MacDonald, 1997; Kennet, 1994; Millar, 1997; Oppenheim, 19997; Walker, 1997). It's multi-faceted nature is what makes social exclusion different from more traditional notions of poverty and deprivation. Duff (1995), for his part, suggests that social exclusion encompasses a broader range of factors than simple poverty. Among these are the inability to participate in, or exclusion from, effective and purposive participation not only in the social and economic aspects of life immediate to the individual but also, in a less obvious way, a palpable sense of alienation on the part of the individual and the imposition and maintenance of distance from traditional society and societal structures. Duff also refers to the dynamic capacity of this process, which he sees as inhibiting the individuals integration into wider society

The work of Walker (1997) and others (for example, Brown & Crompton, 1994; Bruegel & Hegewisch, 1994; Lash, 1994; Maquire & Maguire, 1997) suggests that in recent decades this trend has become more dominant, reflecting the widescale economic restructuring of many economies towards a post-Fordist model (Brown & Crompton, 1997; Bruegel & Hegewisch, 1997; Kennet, 1997). This has been manifest in the drive towards flexibility in the workplace, fuelled both by neo-liberal ideology, giving predominance to the market in both the economic and social spheres, and on the left by a pragmatic policy led approach, seeking to draw the maximum benefit from dwindling resources.

One of the more tangible manifestations of this process has been the increasingly mixed economy of social and welfare provision (Mayo, 1994; Reisman, 1997; Wistow, 1992) which has given renewed significance to the role of actors such as the Catholic church and other NGOs. Walker (1997) has been critical of this trend particularly with regard to what he sees as the implicit suggestion in many market-oriented policy prescriptions that approaches which depend upon the payment of social benefits are to be avoided:

> ....there was the belief that any form of welfare provision – family, self-help, NGOs, but especially that of the market – is superior to welfare from the state. This reflects that classic laissez-faire overture to the public sector as well as the flawed theory of consumer sovereignty. The resulting policy prescription was to roll back state frontiers in welfare and to encourage other forms of provision, especially private and voluntary, to fill then gap. (Walker, 1997 p.6).

Although not of the extreme nature criticised by Walker, at least not yet, the approach currently being adopted by the state apparatus in the UK, appears to be one in which heterogeneity in terms of social care and welfare provision, the inclusion of private agencies and voluntary groups, is seen as highly desirable (Mandelson, 1997).Whether this is an ideological view fuelled explicitly by pragmatic fiscalism or some notion of best practice is uncertain, although some combination of both inputs probably offers the best explanation of this trend

A related factor here is the notion of an emerging 'underclass', a strata of post-modern society within which individuals neither conform or aspire to traditional notions of paid labour or indeed social contract in any traditional sense (Jones, 1997; Maguire and Maguire, 1997;

McDonald, 1997; Roberts, 1997). This highly critical interpretation views the phenomena as nothing short of culturally intrinsic, by its very nature endemic and typical to certain sectors, particularly the youth in society, finding its expression in a combination of welfare dependency and anti-social quasi-criminal behaviour:

> Academic and more populist discussions about the future of the welfare state, about family changes and the consequences of rising rates of single motherhood, about the gnawing attrition of the social fabric by rising crime, and about the extent, experience and social impact of the marginalisation of disadvantaged groups, have all become embroiled in arguments about an underclass. (McDonald, 1997 p.2).

This notion has resonance with Jordan's (1996) particular theory of poverty and social exclusion which is highly critical of notions such as communitarianism and social citizenship. The basis of this argument is that whilst accepting the primary agency of factors such as economic restructuring in the creation of exclusionary tendencies, responses to these trends by certain sectors and groups within society, or what he terms their 'strategic resistance action', have had the negative impact of driving social costs to unsustainable levels. Among such strategies being benefit fraud and other petty criminal behaviour. At the core of Jordan's view is a rejection of the ameliorative capacity of community and notions such as social citizenship and instead, a rather functional and limited emphasis upon the role of certain groups within society in the self-perpetuation of their predicament:

> Exclusion and inclusion are universal features of social interaction, and institutions serve to structure these processes, through states, markets, communities and voluntary associations. Fragmentation of advanced welfare states and new forces of collectivization through transnational systems, the politics of 'race' and immigration, and the emergence of new inter-group conflicts will all be analysed in terms of the economics of collective action. (Jordan, 1996 p.149).

Others, however, have sought to purge the notion of an underclass of such incipient connotations and in the process move the agency of disadvantage away from the individual to create a greater degree of equilibrium between the role of the state and individual in these processes. This has involved using the term to address both issues of class structure and accompanying social and cultural developments, in particular as a conceptual access point in

the investigation of the relative deprivation experienced by certain ethnic minority groups, rather than as a derogatory reference to criminality or dependence.

Just how these trends are interconnected is illustrated by the example of financial exclusion. The work of Dymski and Vetch (1992) and others (Conaty, 1993; Douthwaite, 1996; Gentle, 1993; Ford, 1991; Leyshon & Thrift, 1995) illustrate how exclusionary processes are increasingly becoming manifest in the financial sector with mitigating consequences for those already subject to other forms of disadvantage.

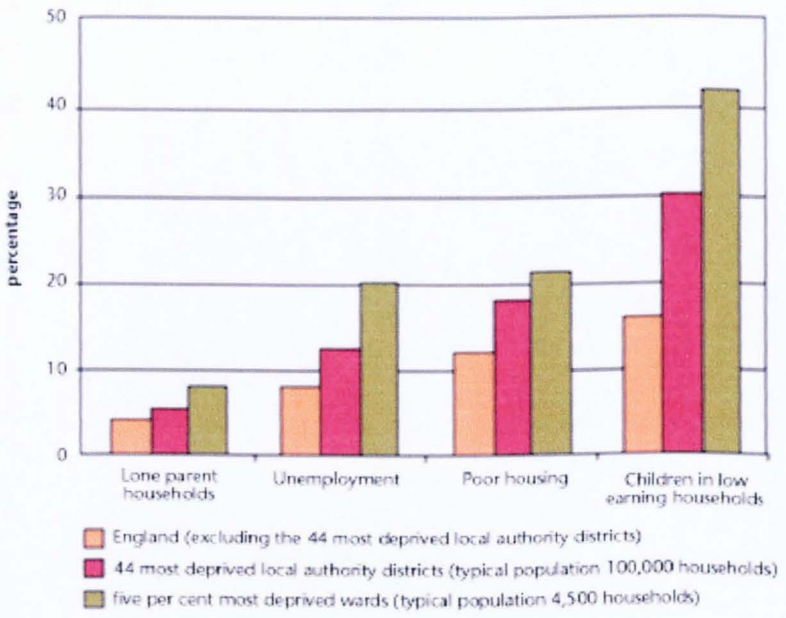
> Although the criteria for exclusion may vary over time, the financial system has an inherent tendency to discriminate against poor and disadvantaged groups. In other words, the poorer and more disadvantaged an individual, the more likely is that they will be excluded from the financial system. The reason for this is that the financial-services industry operates in a way that favours the socially powerful. (Leyshon & Thrift, 1995 p.314).

The most conspicuous manifestation of this problem for these already disadvantaged sectors of society has been the proliferation of branch closures which has accompanied the restructuring process within the financial sector. This has been in response to the increasingly limited and low nature and high degree of risk seen as inherent to the provision of financial services to certain groups and individuals within society. In a practical sense this process has had a number of negative impacts upon disadvantaged communities, not least the denial of access to savings facilities as well as limited credit with extended repayment periods:

4. Spatiality of social exclusion

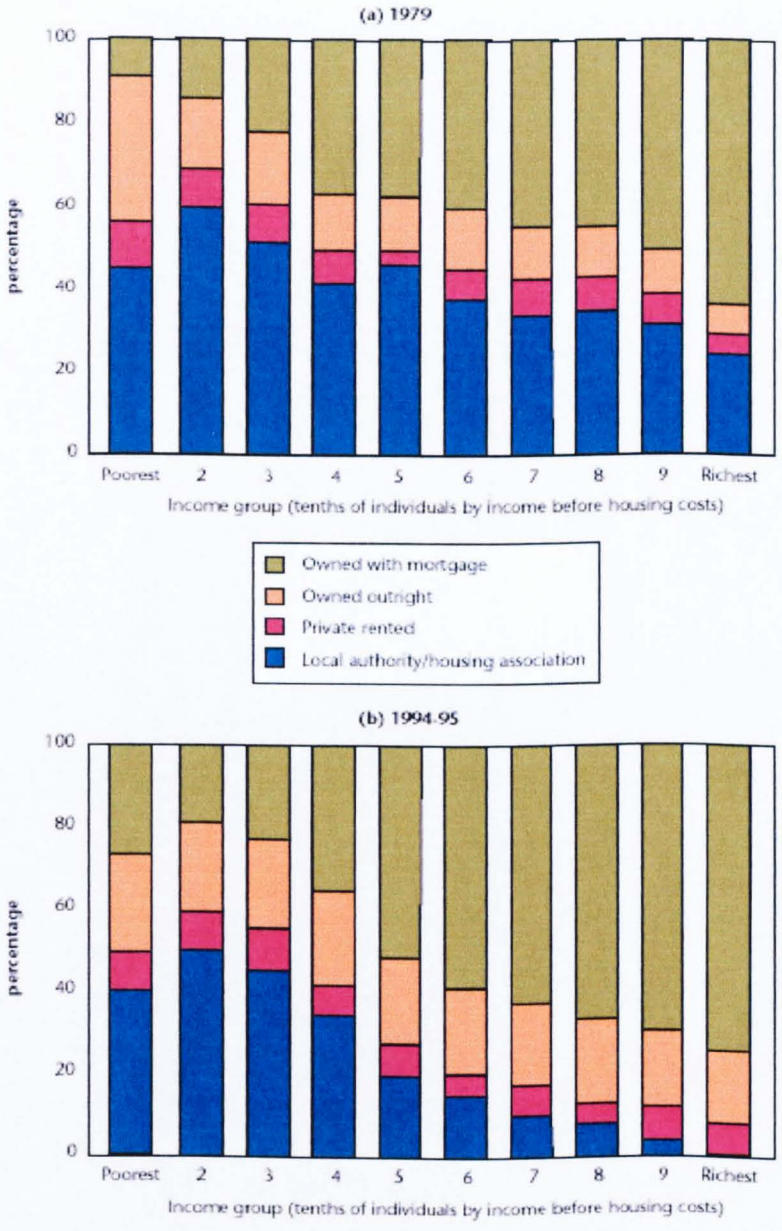
In turn, these trends have had a distinct spatial dimension. Lee et al (1995), in particular have pointed to evidence, based on census data between 1981 and 1991, that during this period the poorest wards in the English metropolitan authorities experienced increases in their relative poverty, not only in terms of unemployment rates but other general indicators of deprivation such as health and housing tenure (Figures 3 and 4). This pattern has also had related and often self-reinforcing impacts, notably that of financial exclusion – or the denial of access to legitimate sources or credit and finance – as the main clearing banks in the UK close branches

Figure 3: Comparison of (a) the five per cent most deprived wards, (b) the 44 most deprived local authority districts, (c) England (excluding the 44 most deprived local authority districts).



(Source: Social Exclusion Unit 1998).

Figure 4: Tenure type by income, 1979 and 1994-5 (England)



(Source: Social Exclusion Unit 1998).

in such areas in response to what they see as their negative equity and high risk low return status (Leyshon and Thrift, 1995).

> Recent trends have led to an increased concentration of low income households in the social housing sector and social housing is often located in distinct neighbourhoods; poorer people have become concentrated in poorer areas. This is especially in the larger cities. (Lee et al, 1995 p.11).

The geography of these exclusionary processes is highly significant because it not only highlights the spatial polarisation that is evident in these processes, but it also provides a focus for understanding how and why these tendencies manifest themselves. It also provides a comparative template in a spatial sense, between the ward or what may be defined as the local communities suffering deprivation, and the Church's response, at the parish level. It is the inner cities which have become the spatial unit of reference in relation to social exclusion, the spatial representation of the context in which the combinations of indicators of poverty and deprivation is used to define an areas problems. The ward in particular, as the basic unit of data which has the greatest relevance to a geographically and possibly sociologically defined community, has been used to gauge these processes. If the ward is used as an indicator of an areas susceptibility to exclusionary processes then conversely the parish is the gauge of the extent and success of the Church's response to these trends.

Whatever the policy perspectives and prescriptions, it is evident that social exclusion is a very tangible entity and that the problems it represents are manifest, in a spatial sense this is particularly evident in the inner-city. This also has to be seen in light of renewed acceptance by the state apparatus of a necessity for a heterogeneous as well as inclusive approach to the amelioration of social exclusion. Regardless of arguments concerning the merits and suitability of state as opposed to voluntary social and welfare provision, evidence suggests that the current Labour Government has accepted the value of NGOs and other such bodies. This is particularly apparent in the renewed vigour with which concepts such as civil society and communitarianism have been adopted in policy statements (Mandelson, 1997).

In turn, the Labour Government's response to the phenomena of social exclusion has drawn, in part, upon the work of Anthony Giddens (1999). Characterised as a 'third way', a reference to its roots in the social democratic tradition, this is an approach which roundly rejects the discrete boundaries of left and right in politics.

> The neo-liberals want to shrink the state; the social democrats, historically, have been keen to expand it. The third way argued that what is necessary is to reconstruct it – to go beyond those on the right 'who say government is the enemy', and those on them left 'who say government is the answer'. (p.70).

Instead, it places a heavy emphasis upon the mobilisation of civil actors to address the problems of many urban neighbourhoods. A weakening sense of solidarity in such areas is seen as a contributory factor in the cycle of exclusion. With its reliance upon notions such as 'citizenship' and the 'stake holder society', it makes reference to the more inclusive approach which is conceived as necessary in the fight against social exclusion. Cooperation and the encouragement of a culture of self-help, are seen as vital if such areas are to break the cycle of exclusion. Community renewal through harnessing local initiative, community based crime prevention, the democratic family, and the involvement of the public sphere are all seen as vital in this process:

> The fostering of an active civil society is a basic part of the politics of the third way. In contrast to the old left, which tended to be dismissive of worries about civic decline, the new politics accepts that such anxieties are genuine. (p.78).

Adopting the 'third way', has required radical changes to the very machinery of government with regards to implementation of ameliorative policies and programmes, as encapsulated by the Government's social exclusion unit. Set up in December 1997 by the Prime Minister, the unit represents a forum for both governmental departments and non-government organisations (NGOs). Through a consultative process, particular issues – education and youth were among the first – are targeted by Policy Action Teams and a collaborative strategy developed between local and regional agencies to tackle these.

True to Gidden's vision, as well as a interdepartmental approach within government, the unit also incorporates actors in the civil apparatus of society, those who are seen as having

experience of tackling social exclusion. Among such groups are, the probation service, local authorities, the voluntary sector as well as other agencies. A central concern identified by the unit is the concentration of exclusionary trends within urban neighbourhoods. Within the context of the Strategy for Urban Renewal, a range of initiatives and innovative approaches to the problem of social exclusion in urban areas has been developed. Emphasis, in particular, has fallen upon the potential to utilise informal social structures, or social capital, in tackling these problems:

> ...we need strategies that work further back in the causal chains that bring about social exclusion. in particular, as well as using formal labour market institutions, this means drawing upon the informal social system and influencing the 'cultural lenses' – aspirations, time horizons, attitudes to risk, and so on – through which people perceive the incentives they face. (Cm 4045)

This approach has been developed conceptually by the Demos think tank. Social capital is seen as one of a number of tools in tackling social exclusion. In particular, informal networks are seen as having value to those who find themselves excluded. For instance, being able to draw upon a widely dispersed pool of acquaintances in a social setting is particularly valuable in gaining knowledge of job opportunities. Some would also suggest that it is important for developing the aspirations of those who find themselves excluded (Peri 6, 1997).

> Government should be enabling people to develop and use their networks. At the very least, it should stop reinforcing the wrong kinds of networks. That's where most job training has gone wrong. Placing unemployed people in a training room where they only meet other unemployed people much like themselves does nothing for their networks (Peri 6, 1997 p.6).

In a more direct sense, social capital can also lead to the development of innovative and localised responses to the needs of an effected community. Credit unions, local economic trading systems (LETS), housing associations, drop-in centres for those with drug and alcohol related problems, workshops to teach basic writing and arithmetical skills and crèches for children and mothers, are just a few of the initiatives which could be employed in an attempt to mitigate the symptoms of exclusionary trends. Yet, the geography of these processes, both social exclusion and social capital, is a crucial element in defining a response. It is important

not only in defining where the problem is, but also in defining potential responses oriented around social capital. It also significant to the conceptual understanding of 'why communities differ in their stocks of social capital' (Putnam, 1993 p.58).

5. The Catholic Church's response to social exclusion

Among the various civil actors who have gained a voice through the unit is the Catholic Church. Its participation can also be seen as part of a general movement within the Church towards a more civil-society based strategy (Casanova, 1996). In the UK this has been particularly evident in the willingness of the Catholic Bishops to engage in the debate surrounding social exclusion. Using the traditional language of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), the Church has engaged terms such as 'subsidiarity', 'solidarity' and the 'Common Good' into a contemporary context and applied them to the issue of exclusion and the role of the welfare state in the UK:

> "Common" implies "all-inclusive": the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of society. If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participation in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then this is a contradiction to the concept of the common good and calls for rectification. (Cm Gd 23).

Notions such as the 'preferential option for the poor', a tenet of the Church since the 1960s, have gained renewed resonance in a Church which is seeking a greater role in civil society. For all its limitations (Green, 1993; Ritchey-Vance, 1993; Pryor, 1992) CST represents a basis for engaging the issues which address society.

Yet, the spatiality of the Church structures, as outlined in a previous chapter, serve to make its engagement in the debate surrounding social exclusion all the more noteworthy. To begin with, there is the nature of the Catholic diocese, with the parish at its base. This could be seen as a valuable asset in any social capital-based strategy, government inspired or otherwise, there being a number of reasons for this. Firstly, as highlighted in Chapter Two, the parish represents a 'closed' community, one which can engender a frequency of interaction between its members. As Coleman (1988, 1990) suggests, this conjunction of structure and focus can precipitate the development of forms of social capital such as trust and reciprocity and the

development of networks useful in tackling social exclusion. Secondly, through its parishes, the Church can also be seen as maintaining a 'grass roots' presence in many of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Cities such as Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester all possess large Catholic populations and all have among the highest rates of deprivation in the UK. Lastly, in an ideological sense, the Church can also benefit from the influence of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which places the poor in society at its centre.

Potential for action on the part of the Church is already evident. One of its more notable successes has been in the creation of credit unions. Douthwaite (1996), in particular, has pointed to the ameliorative impact instruments such as credit unions and local economic trading systems (LETS), among others, can have upon the problem of financial exclusion in the context of both the UK and Ireland. Such small-scale, community based initiatives are an attempt to pool limited financial and other resources with a view to providing small loans to individuals at minimal rates of interest (Berthoud and Hinton, 1991). In an ideological sense, this approach is imbued with the notion of self-help, evident in the work of Douthwaite (1995) and others (Etzioni, 1994; Leadbeater, 1998; Tam, 1998), the notion of communities working to solve their own problems through the development of capacity or, in a less tangible sense 'communality', often in tandem with a rejection of the traditional role of what is seen as an increasingly defunct and discriminatory state-apparatus.

Accordingly, this has been reflected in the proliferation of church-based credit unions in Northern Ireland, where thirty per cent of Catholics are members, and the remainder of Ireland, where twenty nine per cent are members of a credit union. Here, the common associational tie, or 'bond', that the Church represents, appears to have played a crucial role in their proliferation:

> A more plausible explanation for unions' performance North and South of the border lies in the connection with the Catholic church. even though unions in Ireland usually define their potential membership in terms of a geographical area, the actual common bond probably lies in membership of the church. (Berthoud & Hinton, 1991 p. 124).

Credit unions can be particularly potent as tools in community capacity building, that is, providing a focal rallying point for disadvantaged and disaffected groups and communities (Berthoud and Hinton 1989; Douthwaite, 1997). As a strategy against financial exclusion they may also present a valuable tool to disadvantaged groups.

> In Britain credit unions play another role: that of providing banking services to deprived communities after the commercial banks have pulled out. For example, St Columba's Credit Union in Bradford, which operated from a church after it was founded in the middle of the 1970's, responded to the closure of a local branch of the Trustees Savings bank by acquiring its own premises in 1991. (Douthwaite, 1996 p.127-128).

Yet, the parish also represents a distinct social structure, one which can also have benefits for its participants. Among these are access to information. As Coleman (1988 p.S992) suggests, this can be a particularly valuable characteristic of social structures. In turn, Peri 6 (1997) highlights how such networks can provide what he terms the 'weak ties '– or wider 'pool' of association – so as to maximise access to potentially useful information. Benefits, then, can also be gained from the explicitly functional structures of the parish, namely, opportunities to interact informally and frequently, which provide access to knowledge of both need and opportunity:

> A well-known American study a few years ago found that one of the best ways to predict whether an unemployed person would get a job was to check whether they attended church. The reason was nothing to do with the charity or work discipline of practising Christians. Rather, church provides a uniquely valuable place to meet people who can help you find work. (*Guardian* 16.12.97).

More generally, evidence suggests that this potential could be harnessed to develop a more coherent strategy to fight social exclusion at the local level. A wide range of tools and parish-based initiatives are evident in a multitude of parishes, both in the UK and Ireland. Hornsby-Smith (1988) notes the example of one Catholic parish where such a 'density' of networks has been achieved:

> Now the parish organisations include a Justice and Peace group, SPRED for the handicapped, the core group for the pastoral plan, a ministry to the divorced and separate, an advice centre for those receiving social security benefits. The local

equivalent of Manpower Services, ACE (Action on Community and Employment), has an office in the parish centre. (Hornsby-Smith, 1998 p. 581).

As of yet such examples are perhaps the exception. wide variation exists in both the nature and extent of activity within diocese and between parishes (Hornsby-Smith, 19988; 1989). A distinct geography defines the role of Catholic churches in the development of groups, associations and societies indicative of social capital. Obviously, this should be of concern to an organisation which wishes to utilise social capital in tackling exclusionary forces. A first step must surely be to gain an understanding of what forms this geography, why it is that some parishes are more successful at developing groups and others less so. Naturally, this question also has significance more generally to actors other than the Church who perceive themselves in a similar role. The Governments drive to encourage actors drawn form the civil apparatus to take greater responsibility within deprived neighbourhoods, to develop networks, form bonds and act cooperatively, has to be tempered by the question of how social capital from different sources produces different outcome. Who benefits? Can different groups interact? Because of the novel combination of a socially progressive ideology, localised, community-based structures and a vigour for addressing the issue of social exclusion, the Church presents an opportune testing ground in which to investigate these questions. The following section provides a summary of the arguments expressed in this chapter. It also draws attention to a number of questions which they pose, with a view to their empirical investigation in the following chapters.

6. Summary

This chapter has sought to give contemporary resonance to the range of issues discussed in the previous chapter as well as provide, in a very preliminary sense, the context for the subsequent empirical study of some of these issues. This was initially achieved by examining the spatial levels of the Catholic church's function within both the UK and Ireland. In this manner it was seen how certain of these functions may appear to have a spatial bias that makes them largely 'fixed' to a particular level of activity due to their relation to specific sets of relations and social structures that pertain to a given level and function. In particular, it was suggested that

the 'common bond', significant in many practical responses by the Church, was inherent within the parish level of activity. Particular significance was also given here to the informal nature of much of the activity undertaken at this level and the consequent uneven geography that this expressed.

These processes were then placed in the context of social exclusion and, in particular, the nature of responses to this problem. This was seen to be a multi-faceted phenomena which is spatiality defined in urban areas which suffer from a combination of problems including poor housing and unemployment. Yet, in a more general sense, it was also seen to represent a more overarching exclusion from the mainstream of society and access to cultural, leisure and educational resources. Financial exclusion, in particular, was highlighted as yet another strand of this problem. In the UK, the Labour Government's response to this issue was seen to have been heavily influenced by the work of the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1999).

A central theme here is the notion of the 'third way', in which civil actors become increasingly relevant in the provision of services previously the domain of the state. In a policy sense, this approach has become manifest through the Government's Social Exclusion Unit which takes a holistic multi-actor based approach to addressing the numerous strands of the exclusion issue. Among the civil actors which have gained a voice in the policy process through the unit is the Catholic Church. Yet, it was also suggested that the Church's inclusion was particularly significant, for a number of reasons. Not least amongst these was the fact that it, perhaps more than any of its partners on the unit, appears to possess a significant potential to utilise social capital in a mitigating capacity in the fight against social exclusion.

As with social exclusion, social capital, it was suggested, also has a distinct geography. This was seen as central to the Church's capacity to utilise social capital. With this in mind, it was suggested that the parish level of the Church, more than any other, that possessed the greatest potential to act in an ameliorative capacity in relation to the various manifestations of exclusionary processes, particularly given that it was at this 'grass roots' level that the impacts were being felt. The informal nature of many parish activities, in tandem with structures which encourage the development of social capital, appears to have the potential to engender a high

degree of flexibility and responsiveness to contextual differences with regard to the needs of different communities.

The parish, it was suggested, represents a focal point for a range of convergent issues. The first being the Church's practical responses to social exclusion and more generally the social needs of their parishioners. This has a number of components which revolve around the geography of this activity concerning both its nature and extent. Given the increasing problem of social exclusion in tandem with the role parish can play alleviating the effects of social exclusion through the development of it's social capital capacity as well as the Church's avowed renewed wish to tackle these issues, the need to map these informal processes becomes evident, how and where they operate and where they don't operate, why this is the case. These considerations and those discussed in previous chapters form the key questions to be addressed in this thesis, as outlined here:

a) Is there evidence of social capital-related activity at the parish level?
b) How can this be identified?
c) To what extent does this activity differ spatially; (for example, between parishes)?
d) What are the factors, institutional, socioeconomic or otherwise, responsible for this spatial pattern?
e) To what extent do the instruments of social capital interact with other such networks? What is the nature of the dynamic created by this process?
f) To what extent do the benefits of social capital produced by the Catholic church's spread beyond to a wider community?
g) To what extent can the Catholic church be characterised as a distinctive source of social capital?

The following chapter outlines in detail the methodological considerations in placing these questions in an empirical framework for practical investigation. This is initially achieved by an examination of the significance of the debate between quantitative and qualitative sources of data in the context of the study. In particular the use of packages such as NUD.IST and Ethnograph are examined. Other factors highlighted include the issues surrounding interviewing members of the clergy, of particular interest are the gaining of access and

appropriate protocols. In turn, other factors highlighted are the choice of appropriate fieldwork sites, techniques to be used and procedures followed, as well as concerns such as positionality and subjectivity within the empirical process.

Chapter 5: Methodological Considerations

1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to link the previous theoretical material covered with an empirical framework and in this way provide an overview of the main methodological considerations and procedures which are central to this study. This is initially achieved by a reappraisal of the main thesis questions and an assessment of how these defined the methodologies that were used. The chief aspect to emerge through this process was the value of utilising a combined quantitative and qualitative approach. This, it is suggested, was particularly valuable in the process of triangulation and the validation of research material. Underlying this is the notion of grounded theory as an approach to the research process and how this was interpreted in what is described a 'complementary' and 'textured' approach to field work for the purpose of the study. In turn, the tools which were to be used in respect to each approach are highlighted. The first of these is the semi-structured interview. The initial discussion of this technique involves an appraisal of the benefits, limitations and subsequent appropriateness of this tool. This in turn is followed by a discussion of the procedures involved in completing the fieldwork, such as negotiating status with the clergy, as well as an explication of how the methodology worked in practice. Next is a critical appraisal of the decision paths taken as the methodology developed. Following this the coding scheme used is elaborated and the potential role of computer-aided packages therein is highlighted. The subsequent sections deal in depth with the quantitative element of the research and in particular the use of small-area statistics and other data from a variety of sources and the issues that this presented. A key aspect of this is the manner in which social capital was measured for the purpose of the study. The choice of fieldwork sites is then raised – the dioceses of Liverpool, Birmingham and Dublin being introduced – and the factors which determined their choice are dealt with in some detail. The key issues and their implications for the subsequent empirical study are then highlighted in the summary at the end.

2. Qualitative or quantitative?

In any attempt such as this to investigate a set of issues through the empirical process the researcher is initially presented with the selection of a particular methodology and whether this contains qualitative or quantitative elements. In particular this relates to issues of relative merit and value in the adoption of one or other approach in the research process. These methodologies have consistently been portrayed as aligned to relatively rigid approaches to the practice of research within the social sciences, one looking to standardisation as a route to verification, reliability and validity in the research process, the other largely ignoring these as a barrier to a more phenomenologically or ethnographically 'deeper' understanding of particular social events and practices. However, a more productive approach may be to view these methodologies not as exclusive but as part of a wider body of tools and techniques the use of which is as much defined by the questions to be investigated themselves as by any predisposition on the part of an individual researcher (Creswell, 1996; Soloman, 1991). The logical outcome of such a view is to accept the potential value of what could be described as a more textured or complementary approach which regards the incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative elements – in varying degrees – as the nature of the issues investigated determined, rather than a bi-polar and exclusive conception of the research process. With this in mind, the first step in any such process is to examine the nature of the questions being asked. In this study they are as follows:

a) Is there evidence of social capital-related activity at the parish level?

b) How can this be identified?

c) To what extent does this activity differ spatially; (for example, between parishes)?

d) What are the factors, institutional, socioeconomic or otherwise, responsible for this spatial pattern?

e) To what extent do the instruments of social capital interact with other such networks? What is the nature of the dynamic created by this process?

f) To what extent do the benefits of social capital produced by Catholic parishes spread beyond to a wider community?

Initially it seemed obvious that these questions required different types of material in order to be answered whilst some even appeared to require empirical material from more than one source. In a general sense these can be seen as falling into two distinct categories of questions then. The first of these categories includes questions such as those relating to the reasons for any spatial patterns, the nature of any interaction and the inclusiveness of these activities, and appeared to require some degree of direct interplay or interaction with actors within a particular parish who can convey the factors which were important in their involvement and the nature of that involvement. The second category concerns the questions which relate to the quantification and measurement of social capital – both within and between parishes. At first glance, this would initially appeared to require a more standardised approach which can provide scope for comparison and measurement in an empirical sense. However, it was also obvious there is a degree of overlap and that no hard-and-fast boundaries could – or should for that matter – be placed between approaches. It was obvious that material from a variety of sources, as well as a variety of tools and techniques, were likely to be incorporated into the process of answering the questions. The following sections outline the process by which the methodology of this study was developed and discusses the issues associated with this process. The first of these relates to the answering of the questions in the first category highlighted above. Whilst this briefly alludes to the factors which influenceda later section charts a more critical account of the decision paths taken in this process. The survey oriented material that was required for the second set of questions is then discussed in more detail in a subsequent section.

3. Field work techniques and procedure: theory and practice

3.i. Choosing research techniques

As suggested above, the first set of questions required interplay and some degree of interaction with the actors actually involved in the processes of social capital formation and operation described. This approach is best characterised in the interview technique (Babbie, 1997; Brenner, 1984; Drever, 1994; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Oppenheim, 1993; Yin, 1989,1993). As Drever (1995) points out, one of the chief benefits of using the interview in

the research process is its flexibility in accessing a variety of types of material, data and information and from a variety of sources. This flexibility itself is reflected in the degree to which the particular interpretation of the technique adheres to more qualitative or quantitative aims as defined by the particular questions that are being asked in each instance.

A rudimentary classification would place the survey method as characterised by Babbie (1997) and others (Oppenheim, 1993) at one extreme of interpretations of the technique. In general this involves the adoption of an abstract approach using standardised questionnaires and attempts to provide comparable data that can be subject to statistical analyses. This approach would be particularly useful if you were seeking to achieve a wide coverage of respondents. Meanwhile, at the other extreme there are approaches which are more phemenologically sensitive, that are discourse driven and which seek to create a dynamic between the researcher and respondent which as near as possible resembles a 'true' conversation. In this way it is intended to arrive at a more 'accurate' perception of reality. These two diverse methods represent the extreme interpretations of a continuum of approaches, which can be seen as defining the interview as a technique in the research process. What is proposed in the context of this particular study is that an interview approach which adopts a semi-structured methodology, somewhere between the two extremes outlined above offered the greatest potential in mining the information required to answer the first category of thesis questions. This was for a variety of reasons, related both to the nature of the technique itself, not least its flexibility:

> The name 'semi-structured' means that the interviewer sets up a general structure by deciding in advance what ground is to be covered and what main questions are to be asked. This leaves the detailed structure to be worked out during the interview. The person interviewed can answer at some length in his or her own words, and the interviewer responds using prompts, probes and follow-up questions to get the interviewee to clarify or expand on the answers. (Drever, 1995 p. 1).

Whilst a more conversational or phenomenologically sensitive approach would have produced a large amount of very detailed and nuanced material this would probably only relate to a highly defined area of investigation and also prove extremely time consuming. In turn, whilst

the standardised survey oriented methodology has the benefit of coverage, reproducibility and a vigorousness of findings through statistical analyses, it ignores the manner in which the development of questions is often a process incremental to the research and interview process itself and also suffers the limitations of attempting to access the detail of certain social structures and sets of interactions through one-dimensional questions. In contrast, a more in-depth approach can be a valuable tool in the process of 'intensive' research, when the researcher is seeking to understand interrelated processes on a small-scale (Cook and Crang, 1996), as was the case here. For its part, the semi-structured interview had a number of benefits which were of particular value in relation to the specific questions being asked in the context of this particular study, including:

a) Unlike the survey method, it is a formal encounter on an agreed subject, and 'on the record'
b) Again, unlike a conversational approach, the main questions set by the interviewer create the overall structure
c) In turn, prompts and probes fill in this structure: prompts by encouraging broad coverage, probes by exploring answers in depth
d) There can also be a mixture of closed and open questions
e) The interviewee also has a fair degree of freedom: what is talked about, how much to say, how to express it
f) Despite this though, the interviewer can still assert control when necessary

However, the limitations of the technique are also be recognised. Face-to-face, one on one interviews of this nature can only ever provide 'indirect' information which has been filtered through the perceptions, concerns and memories of the interviewees. This factor is inherent to the technique and defines the limits of the resultant empirical material. Despite this, strategies also exist with which to compensate for the emergence of bias and these, along with issues of procedure as well as the recording and transcribing of interviews, are discussed in the following section.

An extremely important aspect of the interview process concerned the specific wording of the questions themselves, in order to avoid misleading or confusing the respondent. This involved pitching the language used in the questions at a level which was not liable to confuse or

confound the interviewee. This was not meant in a patronising 'dumbing-down' way but rather as an effort to avoid academic jargon with which a respondent might not have been familiar by defining certain terms – for instance 'community development' – for them. The use of leading questions was also something that was to be avoided. This can occur, either consciously or non-intentionally, when the researcher corrals a respondent into giving a particular response or talking about a particular area of interest to them which in fact the individual may see as having little relevance to their own experience but despite this feels obliged to talk about it nonetheless because it has been raised as an issue. An example in the context of this study would have been to say to an individual in an interview situation that 'teachers are often a focal group in the Church's community-based groups', thus flagging a predisposition to discuss this issue, rather than a statement such as 'what role do teachers play in the various groups in your parish?' The latter phrasing offers the option that they might not be significant at all. In a similar vein, it was important to avoid limited choice questions such as those that begin 'Do you think' or 'Do you agree' which not only could have limited responses but also hindered the potential for more considered answers and discussion.

A range of simple prompts and probes, adjacent to an initial question, also proved useful in seeking clarification on a point just made or in asking the respondent to expand upon a point in relation to a specific response. To assist the smoothness of the interview process as well as reduce the incidence of confusion – on the part of both the researcher and respondent – the questions were laid out in a simple form as part of a defined interview schedule brought along to each formal interview upon which the questions were noted and read from, and upon which points were deleted as they were covered, as well as potential prompts and probes highlighted.

Within each parish, in turn, the number of positive responses to requests for interviews was a reflection of peoples' willingness to participate and availability at the time of the field visit. In this way a wide variety of actors involved in parish activities were selected (see Appendix A for list.) The relatively low number of interviews at certain sites often reflected the sparseness of activity within these parishes. The interviews themselves lasted for between thirty minutes and one hour and concentrated upon four key areas. Moreover, the order of the questions

adopted a logical progression, starting with those which are more general in nature and moving onto those which were quite specific. These, in turn, were be divided into primary (or main) questions which covered a specific topic of the research, 'secondary' questions covering various aspects of that topic, as outlined here:

(1) . Contextual issues (both closed and open-ended questions)
  i) how a particular group started
  ii) the activities performed by the group
  ii) numbers of people involved in running the group
  iv) numbers of people participating in the group
  v) the participation of non-Catholic's
(2) Perceptions and opinions of respondents role within group (open-ended in nature):
  i) role of respondent within the group
  ii) length of their involvement
  iii) reasons and motivations for becoming involved
(3) Cooperation with other groups (open-ended in nature):
  i) nature and extent
  ii) reasons for (lack of) cooperation
(4) Perceptions of Church's role within parish (open-ended in nature):
  i) defining the Church's role within parish
  ii) approval or disapproval for this role
  iii) need for change
  iv) perceived limitations upon change

Another important aspect included in this process was a consideration of the influence of interview locations upon the nature of responses. With particular reference to Cook and Crang's (1996) work on positionality in the interview process – discussed in more detail in a subsequent section – whenever felt to have influenced the process, the conditions under which the interview took place were noted. Also, instances where a respondents demeanour was felt to have influenced the nature their responses, for instance if they were brief, if they appeared comfortable and amenable, are also reported. Within each diocese, the selected parishes were randomly designated A to D (A and B in the case of Dublin) with no reference to similiarities between parishes of different diocese but simply for the purpose of giving a clear indication of

Figure 5 The selection of sites through the process of redundancy[1]

Category Parish	Catholic population	socioecomic status[2]	majority population	minority population	level of activity[3]
Type 1	small	deprived	×	✓	high
Type 2	average	affluent	×	✓	low
Type 3	average	deprived	✓	×	high
Type 4	large	affluent	✓	×	high

Notes:

1. some degree of variation is expected in the nature of sites within each diocese and this will partly be a function of the particular characteristics of a given area, for instance the multi-cultural nature of Birmingham and the high levels of relative deprivation that are particularly evident in Liverpool. These will be tailored to address specific aspects of the study such as social exclusion and the inclusiveness of the Church's social capital function
2. as gauged using Browne's (1989) classification
3. above or below average for the diocese as a whole

what site was being referred to at any given time within the text (and in order to avoid confusion).

One particular problem which could have potentially arisen with reference to the interview process was that of systematic bias, effecting both the validity of the process itself and any resultant material (Drever, 1991). This is particularly pertinent here since in certain cases a greater degree of encouragement had to be exerted upon a potential interviewees in order to get a balanced picture – this was particularly true in those parishes which displayed limited activity. As Drever suggests, it is better to see the people you want to whilst recognising their right to opt out of the process if they should so choose. In order to address this issue for the purpose of this study, an enlarged sample was taken in the initial stages which allowed for a degree of 'redundancy' when the final sites were selected in order to prevent bias entering the process either though a lack of appropriate respondents or sites (Figure 5). As the table on the following page shows this enlarged sample consisted of four groups, each containing four parishes with distinct characteristics, which allowed for the thorough investigation of the main thesis questions.

Another important aspect of interview procedure concerned the choice of actual meeting places for the interviews, a number of issues having to be borne in mind here. Firstly, the need to put interviewees at ease. In practice this involved arranging to meet at locations at which the respondent was likely to feel comfortable, a site which was both familiar and reassuring to them. The intention was to relax them and reduce their perception of being subjected to an unpleasant ordeal or verbal grilling. Another significant aspect here was the respondents perception of their own personal safety and obviously this was particularly pertinent to female respondents who may have felt a degree of reticence at meeting a male researcher who, other than a brief chat on the telephone, they would in all likelihood have had no previous knowledge of. This was where the parish priest played a valuable role. As he had already had contact with the researcher, he could reassure the prospective interviewees as to the nature of the meeting. It was especially important that every effort was made to arrange a familiar and appropriate site, not too isolated, preferably in close

proximity to other people, whilst still remaining relatively conducive to a degree of privacy in order to minimise interruptions or distractions. By far the most common locations used were parish presbyterys and church halls, although respondents homes were occassionally used as well.

3.ii. Taping and transcription

Following procedures outlined by Drever (1991) and others (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Yin, 1989, 1993) the interviews were all recorded on tape for the purpose of transcription. The main advantage of this approach was that transcription provided a relatively 'accurate' representation of the original interview experience. Transcriptions are also a valuable tool in the process of both validating conclusions and ensuring against their misrepresentation. Its main disadvantage, on the other hand, is that it is time exhaustive, Drever (1995 p.61), for instance, suggests that one hour of tape can represent 2-3 hours work for a skilled audio typist, twice that for somebody with limited keyboard skills and twice that again when written out by hand. These problems can be overcome by partial-transcription but this again raises problems of selective bias, so the approach adopted for the purpose of this study was as complete as possible transcription in preparation for the coding process described below (see Appendix B for an example of the text of a complete transcription.) Another problem with the transcription process concerns the representation of the subtle nuances and non- verbal mannerisms such as intonation and posture. In order to counter this for the purpose of this study, a similar procedure to that suggested by Drever (1995) was used. This involved inserting a standard set of text symbols to represent or denote certain activities or intonations such as [spoken in a jocular manner] where the brackets tell us that the respondent made a statement which was not meant to be taken too seriously (again, see Appendix B for example.)

3.iii. In the field

Whilst previous sections have dealt ostensibly with the technical aspects of the empirical work – the tools engaged – this one seeks to elaborate upon its practice to suggest how the methodology actually worked in the field and, in particular, the procedures involved therein.

An early stage of this process involved contacting potential interviewees. The strategy adopted involved making initial contact with the parish priest at each location. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, without the cooperation of the parish priest field work in a given area would have been both unethical – in the sense that without prior consent being sort there would have been considerable potential for causing friction within a given community – not to mention relatively infeasible. The second point – already highlighted in the previous section – was that by virtue of his position the parish priest could act as advocate to other potential interviewees, introducing the researcher and asking for their cooperation, a type of targeted 'snowballing'. Moreover, this approach appeared to be quite successful with no potential respondents refusing to participate once their parish priest had initially approached them. Of course, there was also the possibility that access could be denied by clerics, thus skewing the range of respondents, but this was only evident in one case where a parish priest requested an individual not be included because they had recently suffered a family bereavement.

The parish priests in the selected parishes were initially contacted by telephone in order to gauge their willingness to participate and grant access to other potential respondents. After this 'filtering' process, four parishes were chosen to provide representative samples. Following this, the parish priest at each site was sent a covering letter providing more detail of the study and confirming a prearranged meeting time and place decided upon in the initial telephone call. Next came these actual 'primer' interviews. As already suggested, these also acted as instruments with which to gain further access to other respondents within each particular parish – in this instance parishioners who ran church-based groups and clubs who were then themselves phoned and asked whether they would consent to participate and – assuming they replied in the affirmative – were sent a explanatory covering letter which confirmed a meeting place and time for an interview.

Visiting the sites for the purpose of interviewing also provided an opportunity to make a first hand assessment – or 'reconnaissance' even – of the concerned area. Prior to the first interviews arranged at any given parish the researcher took the opportunity to make an

informal assessment of the nature of the housing conditions and general 'ambience' of the local area with a view to having a mental map of some of the main features, such as where housing estates, commercial areas, schools, and so on, were situated so that responses to questions could be better interpreted and placed in specific locations. Given the relative size of most parishes this process usually took no more than two hours, during which basic notes were also taken. Moreover, this was either done just prior to an interview, or the day before if the researcher was staying overnight. In relation to the last point, it can also be related that the general format was for the interviewer to spend at most three days in a particular location. Issues of distance, cost of travel (given the number of sites) as well as the fact that whilst some interviewees were available at similar times others were not, meant that this approach was a – if not ideal – necessary strategy. As discussed in a later section, one of the lessons of the methodology was the suggestion that a more prolonged occupancy in a smaller number of parishes might have proved beneficial in gaining an insight into the tacit nature of relations which described social capital.

4. Negotiating status with the clergy

Given the significance and centrality of one particular social group within the parish structure, namely the cleric, it was crucial to develop a strategy, which allowed the researcher to gain maximum benefit from the interview process in these specific instances.[1] Aldridge's (1986, 1995), explication of his experiences interviewing Anglican clergy was particularly valuable here. In particular, he highlights the elite status of the clergy, whilst suggesting that the research process requires the affirmation of both commonalities and divergence's of values, objectives and professional competence between cleric and academic:

> I contend that, in the research act, what the social scientist has to accomplish is a successful negotiation of relations of prestige—of deference, acceptance, and derogation. In the case of my own work with Anglican clergymen and women, I consciously sought to emphasize the elements of congruence, in particular similarities of occupational culture and habitus (Aldridge, 1995 p.118).

[1] Coxon et al (1986) highlight the limitations of a one-dimensional approach to the establishment of rapport between academic and interviewee merely on the basis of occupational prestige

Such an approach was particularly valuable in the context of this study given the recent proliferation of scandals relating to the Catholic Church and the scepticism of the motives of researchers this may have engendered amongst the clergy approached for the purpose of the study. Although Aldridge's work concerns the Anglican as opposed to Catholic clergy, it remained useful in this context because of the similarities that exist between the perception and operation of the two, although in the case of the latter his picture does require some qualification. With regard to this, a number of divergences can be seen to exist between the respective set of clerics in this social group and which also had significance to the process of gaining rapport in the interview process as well as gaining access.

The first point to note is that the Catholic Church in the UK is – in legal as well as other respects – subordinate to its Anglican counterpart. Historically, its development has been in the face of opposition from certain quarters and this has resulted in it adopting a defensive and non-confrontational strategy, which could be seen to impinge upon the relative status of its clerics. As Hornsby-Smith (1989;1990) highlights, Catholic clergy are usually regarded with high esteem among their parishioners in the UK, but this is less evident outside these limits with even outright hostility being in evidence in certain areas. There are a number of reasons for this, not least the fact that the Catholic clergy are often Irish – or of Irish 'extraction' – which sets them apart from their Anglican counterparts, and that the parishioners the clergy minister to are also usually drawn ostensibly from the immigrant Irish communities of large UK cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. In Ireland by contrast, as least outside of Northern Ireland, the situation is very different. As Chubb (1991) suggests, the Catholic clergy represent an elite social group which, although on the wane, still maintains high social status by virtue of fulfilling the legal and 'civil religious' functions ascribed to the Anglican Church in the UK. Although, it should also be noted that scandals surrounding the nefarious activities of certain clerics have a negative impact upon the general perception of the clergy in both countries.

Despite these qualifications the Catholic clergy in the UK can still be seen as representing a highly educated, knowledgeable and, as Hornsby-Smith points out, in many cases professional

in all but name, social group. They are often experienced practitioners in aspects of social welfare and community development and an appreciation of this and it's consequences for the interview process was a central theme of this study:

> In spite of any increase in the participation of lay people in the life of the Church in recent decades, the priest remains in a very powerful position by virtue of both his juridical status and the deep-rooted normative expectations there are concerning his decision-making rights and power and his relationship with his parishioners. (Hornsby-Smith, 1991 p.115).

One such implication, also highlighted by Aldridge (1995) arises in the negotiation of status between the cleric and the interviewer, namely the stability and formation of boundaries of discourse and knowledge, or what areas are perceived to be the expertise and domain of each actor in the process and the implications of this for the interview process. In practice this is significant because the researcher, in his capacity as a social scientist, may be seen to possess a certain knowledge whilst the cleric, for his part, may be expected to possess some expertise regarding Catholic social teaching and theological matters. The important aspect here is that this dynamic could be used to prompt a dialogue between the participants in the interview process which was not diluted by the researchers preconceptions or viewpoints and allows the respondents own undiluted viewpoint to emerge:

> In regard to theology, ...my role was to be deferential. I gave no indication of familiarity with technical theological writing. On the other hand, I felt it necessary to ensure, in advance of my interviews, that I understood the formal organisation of the Church of England, had learned its technical vocabulary, and was *au courant* with contemporary issues in the Church. This partly accounts for the fact that all my respondents appeared to assume (incorrectly) that I am a communicant member of the Church of England. (Aldridge, 1995 p.121).

This also raises another important issue, namely that of positionality with particular reference here to the researcher and its significance to the interview process. This had a number of implications which, in turn, could have impacted upon the direction and nature of questioning which may or may not have had desirable outcomes for this study. The issue of whether or not respondents should have been made aware of the researchers own experience of the Catholic

church was a significant one here. If the researcher had been asked by a cleric or other respondent 'Are you Catholic yourself?' the answer to this simple question could have had severe implications for the path of the following interview, presuming this was when the question was asked. An answer of, 'No, but I used to be a practising Catholic', had the potential to cause scepticism and hostility and a defensive attitude in the interview process with the consequence of blurring a 'truer' picture. Likewise, as Aldridge found, it may have simply been taken for granted that the researcher was a Catholic and, again, this may also have changed the nature of responses. These influences could be seen as either positive or negative in that respondents may have been more candid with someone they assumed was a Catholic. Yet, on the other hand, they may also have taken it for granted that the researcher was aware of certain practice and customs which he may not have been and, as a result, not elaborated certain issues. The strategy adopted to counter these problems in the context of this study was, as Aldridge (1995) suggests, to emphasise the academic persona more whilst avoiding drawing attention to the researchers own religious predilections or experience. Nonetheless, these factors were still seen as impinging significantly upon the nature of the 'knowledges' which were tapped through the interviews.

The importance of placing the study in the academic rather than public realm in the minds of potential interviewees, was also potentially crucial in gaining access in an environment of some scepticism towards the Catholic clergy in the light of a number of recent scandals. A related factor here is the issue of anonymity with regard to the material provided during interviews with the clergy. Given the nature of some of the questions, certain respondents may not have wished what they may see as contentious views attributed directly to them, and every effort was made to reassure clerics both before and during interviews that material would not be directly attributable in the final study:

> The success of my research depended on establishing my own independence from internal Church affairs. I tried to do everything possible to confirm my identity as a sociologist at the University of Nottingham conducting independent academic research. For example, in a cover letter accompanying a mail questionnaire, I stated that, "This is

a piece of individual academic research and is not being carried out on behalf of any organization or interest group inside or outside the Church". (Aldridge, 1995 p.119)

Whilst these devices and techniques aimed at making the interview process both enlightening and as comprehensive as possible are related here with particular regard to the clergy, they were also of value when interviewing the non-clerical respondents. The issue of anonymity, for instance, may have been particularly important to parishioners who had views about either the Catholic Church in general, or their parish in particular, which could be seen as unfavourable. An assurance of anonymity may have encouraged such individuals to be more candid than they might otherwise have been.

5. Positionality and subjectivity

The issue of positionality, as discussed in the previous section, has a wider implication in relation to the subjectivity of the in-depth element of this study. In particular, this relates to the claims of representing a 'true' picture of events through the interview process. At issue here is the notion that the social exchange as part of the empirical process can be unproblematically read and interpreted, that it can represent a consistent and unchanging representation of 'truth'. Indeed, the notion of the detached researcher is an unrealistic and, some would say, undesirable one (Cook and Crang, 1996; Hedges, 1985; Pile, 1993). These commentators argue that interview should be seen as a social exchange, and as such, embedded in multiple context, cultural, historical or otherwise, which influence the positionality of the knowledge and experience of the interviewer as much as the interviewee. Knowledge gained through such an interactive process is as much a product of the identities of those involved, whether these be gendered, coloured or classed, as it is any particular methodology. The in-depth interview provides knowledge, in the form of responses, views and opinions, which is positioned in such a manner. Accepting this is a central element of this aspect of the study. However, it should be seen as a positive rather than negative consequence, one which can prove of value to the research process and one which, by its nature, requires the researcher to adhere to a high degree of rigour in the research process (Cooke and Crang, 1996). The nature of this knowledge can also be effected by the context in which the social interaction takes place.

> The in-depth interview has also to be seen as embedded in a particular context, a 'place' where the social interaction actually takes place. This in itself can be seen to have an impact upon the nature of the positioned knowledge that emerges through this process. (Cooke and Crang, 1996 p.34).

Both the substance and nature of responses can be influenced by location and setting. These may provoke, or even hinder, recollections or the formation of associations between events, which can be of value to the researcher. Place or location is an important factor in the nature of the positioned knowledge gained through the interview process. Similarly important is the recognition of the influence of national and even global cultures upon that of an individual within a defined community. This also relates to the misconception in the research process of communities as 'closed systems' which are not impinged upon by other national or even global influences (Giddens, 1984; Knorr-Cetina 1981; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). There is a need for an acceptance that locales are influenced in such a manner, both in their construction of identity as well as their perception of events and issues which affect them:

> ...local cultures cannot be ring fenced from large scale, political and economic processes because the global is not 'out there', intruding annoyingly on the study but is always 'in here', only existing through variously connected localities. (Cooke & Crang, 1996).

Nonetheless, the in-depth approach adopted in the interview process for the purpose of this study leave it open to a charge of subjectivity in the research process. In order to counter this accusation, a process of validation which takes into account these factors was adopted. Cooke and Crang (1996) outline a number of strategies which can be used to achieve this, the first of these being termed 'theoretical sampling'. What this relates to is the process by which individuals are selected for interview in the context of a particular study. Part of the validation framework for ethnographic work is that candidates should be chosen on the basis of their capacity to bring enlightenment to a particular issue. This can be by virtue of their position within a particular group or their experience of, and proximity to, certain processes.

This contrasts directly with the more randomised approach taken in the survey-based study where the main concern tends to be the achievement of the greatest degree of coverage in

relation to population. However, as McCracken (1988) points out, the emphasis in ethnographic work should be upon quality not quantity. Another aspect important to this validation process is the notion of 'theoretical saturation'. What this refers to is the necessity of the researcher to identify the point at which the discourses emerging through the research process begin to overlap. This is the point at which 'saturation' has been reached, and it may be appropriate at such a junction to search for differently positioned discourses and access alternative sources of information. Cook and Crang (1996) also make a call for theoretical adequacy in the validation of qualitative research. Again, in practice this involves using prior research conducted by others in similar areas or upon similar topics. It also involves conceptual rigour, or a commitment on the part of the researcher to the possible integration of other theoretical frameworks than those which were originally invoked.

In a tangible sense, these issues have influenced this particular study in two distinct ways. Firstly, they prompt an acceptance that no claims to objectivity can, or should, be made with regards to the in-depth element of the study. Secondly, if the research process is seen as one which is 'intersubjective', one in which the empirical picture that emerges is defined through the interaction of researcher and respondent, this has to be reflected in the practice of the research itself. In a practical sense this involves the incorporation of factors which may impinge upon the nature of the material which emerges through the interview process. Accordingly, factors such as the countenance and demeanour of respondents was noted and interpreted along with verbal responses. Consequently, it was accepted that factors such as vocal affectation and the duration of answers could have as significant an impact upon the interpretation of responses as the content of the answers themselves. As the sections on transcription and interview procedure have already illustrated, these considerations frame this study.

6. Site selection

The selection of appropriate sites in which to investigate the main thesis questions was guided by a number of factors, and although some of these were common to all the chosen locations, others were specific to certain locales. The adoption of a multi-case study approach (Marshall

& Rossman, 1989; Creswell, 1996) can be seen as both a function of the nature of these questions and also a reflection of the spatial dimension that these have. Moreover, one beneficial consequence of this was the limitations inherent within the more traditional single case study were avoided. One of the main benefits of the multi-case variant is that it provides a large amount of comparative data, which is particularly useful when attempting to validate results. In the first instance, the main requirement posed by the thesis questions was the selection of a number of diocese, in both the UK and Ireland, which had large Catholic populations.

As previously highlighted such a feature was crucial to the process of 'redundancy', as used in the selection of sites. The enlarged sample this approach utilised reduced the possibility that sites which possessed certain desirable characteristics were not available for study due to an inability to gain access to at least one of four alternatives. In this way the influence of different conditions on the main thesis questions, as outlined at the start of this chapter, could be gauged. This also ensured that the factors behind the varying levels and nature of activity, as well as interaction, inclusiveness and issues such as social exclusion, could be investigated in a selection of sites which were more likely to prove enlightening than a general attempt to provide greater coverage in terms of numbers of parishes. In the context of the UK, the only diocese that could fulfil such a criteria were citywide, even then only the larger cities which supported a sizeable Catholic population. Moreover, the selection of the Dublin diocese also enabled an assessment of the impact upon the nature and patterns of parish-based activity in a context very much different to that in the UK, one where the Catholic Church assumed a dominant role both in terms of organised religion and more generally within civil society. In the UK, the two diocese selected were Liverpool and Birmingham. Together, the three sites possessed a number of characteristics which highlighted them as suitable for investigating the main thesis questions.

Firstly, in all three cities significant proportions of their populations are classified as Catholic in relation to their religious affiliation. Whilst at over one million, Dublin's Catholic population is by far the largest, Birmingham's 87,000 and Liverpool's 152,900 also make them

amongst the largest Catholic populations in the UK. Although this is a relatively vague indication[2] it does give a good basic indication of the significance of the Church in these cities. The main factor here is the scope this provided in terms of addressing the main questions with a degree of flexibility concerning access to sufficient sites and other issues. The second and equally important factor was the high levels of relative deprivation evident in large areas of the three cities, although this is more pertinent in the case of Liverpool it was also relevant to the other two, offering a valuable context within which to examine the issues surrounding social exclusion and more importantly the Church's role in the amelioration of its impacts. Another aspect that was particularly pertinent to Birmingham was the issue of ethnicity and the inclusiveness of the Church's activities (the lack of any large ethnic groups meant that this was always likely to be less of an issue in the context of Liverpool or Dublin.)

Moreover, a wider spatial structure defined the position of the parishes chosen for study within each diocese, the latter representing the regional (often focussed on a city) administrative level of the Church. Separating these diocese into a number of smaller administrative units were deaneries, whilst the parishes within which the case study work was conducted were found at the bottom of this spatially stratified structure. Whilst these parishes usually covered an area smaller than a ward (or district electoral division in the case of Ireland) this depended upon how the Catholic population was dispersed within a given area. Although actual numbers varied, the number of parishes in each of the diocese averaged around seven to a deanery. As well as this, there were also a range of actors associated with each tier, who fulfilled specific roles and exerted influence through the diocesan system at their own particular level. From the diocese down, these included: an Archbishop; a number of auxiliary Bishops; deans; and lastly; the parish priests. In turn, there were also a range of diocesan-based agencies and organisations maintained by the Church within each site.[3]

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[2] it can include not only actively practising Catholics, but those who consider themselves Catholic but who do not practice the religion in a traditional sense as well as those who may not even consider themselves Catholic but are included due to parentage

[3] Included among these are a large number of schools, both Primary and Secondary – the Dublin diocese, for instance, containing 516 and 192 of these respectively. Numbers are fewer in the Liverpool and Birmingham diocese – unsurprising given the much larger base population of Catholics in the Irish example – these containing 107 and 223 Primary as well as 9 and 17 Secondary schools respectively. Similarly, in terms of diocesan-based organisations, Dublin contains by far the larger number, over 500 in all, Birmingham and Liverpool both accounting for around 50.

A range of activities were also correspondingly associated with the parishes in each instance and given that – as Chapter Three suggested – this was the level at which social capital can be developed most effectively, it was also the main focus of the field work. Among the activities at this level were credit unions, social clubs, charitable groups, youth groups, crèches, counselling groups for drug and alcohol related problems, as well as a number of housing federations, among a host of other activities. Again, whilst levels of this activity differed overall between the three diocese – it was evident that Dublin was much more active on a parish level than either of the two UK diocese – where they corresponded was in the varied geography of this activity. Accordingly, the manner in which certain parishes appeared to maintain proportionately more activities than others – even though in some instances they were smaller in size – was particularly significant. As already seen, the activity at this level was characterised as particularly notable because it is seen as having a social capital function. Accordingly, the techniques outlined in this chapter were designed to assess the nature of this capacity.

7. The use of secondary data

Of course the processes and procedures described in previous sections did not take place autonomous to other social and economic factors and potential influences. Consequently it was also necessary to develop a distinct contextual picture of those sites where fieldwork took place, 'embedding' the activities investigated in specific social and economic contexts. Not only did this suggest the significance of the Church's contribution in relation to other forms and sources of social capital in a given area but it also allowed an appreciation of its role, its overall significance, or more precisely, whether or not it was addressing a specific need – social or otherwise oriented – within a given parish. In order to achieve this level of contextualisation material from a variety of sources was required. The first of these was socioeconomic, area-based data, relating to levels of unemployment, overcrowding, housing type and access to amenities, which was used to compare conditions between different parishes

Although these figures should be put in the context of the UK, in which terms the two dioceses are amongst the most active in the country. Such groups include a wide range of charitable organisations and welfare groups, as well as hostels, orphanages and communities of religious such as monasteries and convents.

and within cities as a whole in order to gauge relative deprivation for these areas. Browne's (1989) study of an Anglican parish in Leeds provided a useful precedent here.

The two main sources used to gain this socioeconomic data were the 1991 census in the case of the UK parishes and the more recent 1996 census for Ireland. The spatial unit data drawn from in the case of the UK examples was the ward. This offered the level of depth which was needed whilst remaining relatively specific to a particular area within which a parish was situated, reflecting the patterns therein. In the case of Ireland where a different classification is used, district electoral divisions (DEDs) were used to proximate to particular parishes. In turn, certain parishes did not fall perfectly within the boundaries of either wards or DEDs – although their tended to be a better correspondence with the latter of these two – so in order to address this a 'best-fit' approach was used whereby the ward or DEDs which the majority of the parish fell within was used as indicative of its socioeconomic indicators. Again, it was hoped that the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative material would supplement this process and enable the definition of any particular nuances of each parish's population. Another potential source of such material came in the form of the annual audits of rudimentary social indicators carried out by the Legion of Mary in certain parishes. In particular, these proved valuable in suggesting the uniqueness or otherwise of the Catholic populations in each area.

In regard to the actual indicators used, a relatively limited set was adopted in order to make comparison easier and clearer. Although these differed slightly between the UK and Ireland – because of the proclivities of the various census offices – they still gave roughly similar pictures. As already suggested, the choice of these sets was influenced by the indicators of deprivation used by Browne (1989) in her study of the role of an Anglican parish in a severely deprived area of Leeds and are particularly pertinent to this study because of it's concern to assess the Church's role in the amelioration of the range of factors which comprise social exclusion. These were, in turn, unemployment rates, overcrowding, numbers of one-parent families, numbers of pensioners, households lacking basic amenities and ethnic origin. These were also compared to the average for each respective city as a whole in order to give an indication of relative deprivation.

One problem here however was the fact that the Irish census data did not include either of the last two elements and to counter this alternative measures were included in the Dublin parishes. Other supplementary indicators that were available for the UK wards included household characteristics and car ownership. Moreover, further distinctions were also made in the data on the basis of gender, age and ethnicity in certain cases where it is felt that they would give a further insight on conditions in a particular area. Other forms of secondary data used included indicators of community development and related facilities. What this formed in practice was an audit of social capital within each parish. Just how social capital was measured for the purpose of this study also concerns issues of the decision paths that were taken in this process. Accordingly, before this is outlined, a more detailed account of these processes than has been given so far, and how they impinged upon the trajectory of the study, needs to be provided.

8. Measuring social capital for the purpose of the study

The problem of quantifying a concept as relatively intangible as social capital is one that is evident in much of the literature concerning the notion (Levi, 1991; Wilson, 1997; Fox, 1997; Putnam, 1991a, 1991b). Commentators such as Fox (1997) and Levi (1991) are particularly critical of the approach used by Putnam's empirical elucidation of social capital. However, Putnam is not alone in his particular methodological limitation. The chief problem is that too often little attention is given to the actual dynamic and manifestation of social capital as a transient process which can be reproduced but just as easily undermined in equally short periods of time. In addition, it is also a process that often alludes to traditional notions of being fixed in a particular site or place.

In other cases the notion is invoked as a empirical 'magic-bullet' to ills such as social exclusion without due reference to the fact that social capital can be as complicit in causing exclusion as breaking down its barriers (Peri 6, 1998). Wilson (1997) adds to this debate by suggesting that the problem of operationalising social capital in an empirical sense in the field of community development has been ignored and replaced by a tendency to focus on, "..more traditional tangible products or using input measures

for the intangibles, number and size of organisations assisted, number of meetings held, etc." (p.745). This has resonance with the approach of Putnam and others who, with a little variation, utilise the measurement of numbers of micro-networks as a key element in their quantification of social capital in a given context.

However, the problem with this approach is that social capital as a resource is seen to have no horizontal or vertical barriers or limits. Furthermore, it can be argued that such an approach crucially misses the point that such groups do not universally create social capital of a similar type or to similar degrees. Moreover they are not always representative of social capital in action. This is akin to a closed-system approach when a more environmental view which incorporates notions of the political, cultural and socioeconomic context would seem both more balanced and valid as an approach. In defence of Putnam however, it could also be said that by their very nature such groups and micro-networks offer the possibility that social capital can be created and developed as a resource. The important factor to accept however is that their mere existence is not proof positive that social capital is in operation or indeed if it were what degree of such activity was taking place.

In the context of this study – as discussed in the previous section – these issues required a trade-off between the conceptual and the methodological in order to enable a valid quantification to take place within certain defined limits. An initial stage in this process was setting the empirical limits for the fieldwork. Forms and structures of social capital such as trust, obligations and reciprocity are nebulous relations that largely defy quantification. Even if a study was long-term and phemenologically based it would have been a relatively unrealistic proposal. However, aspects such as trust and reciprocity can be reasonably be expected to develop or be most likely to develop under particular circumstances. In general these are typified by small to intermediate social structures which crucially allow for both concerted and protracted interaction on the part of individuals within such systems, whether they be a local group or family unit, in order to engender the development of social capital. Such structures themselves could

be seen as representative of social capital because by their very nature they represent networks along which information can travel and nodes of access to other individuals who may provide benefits of various kinds, social, economic and emotional, among others.

However, this is where the interpretation adopted for the purpose of this study deviated from Putnam's. As already suggested, in an empirical sense it is infeasible to suggest that the presence small groups or micro-networks can be seen as evidence of social capital in action, rather that they represent the potential for social capital to be active as a resource, a resource which in this way may be seen to differ spatially. In a practical sense what this involves is a process of audit. Such an audit would incorporate the density of micro-networks in a given area in order to provide a quantification of a potential resource of social capital rather than an unqualified, in a conceptual sense, measurement which it is was felt could not be empirically valid. Measuring these groups provided an indication of what efforts had been made to engender social capital in a given context as well as its nature, the individuals it benefited as well as its limitations.

In the case of those micro-networks related to Catholic parishes, the annual audits carried out in the larger diocese in the UK proved a valuable source of material. With regard to non-Church groups, council lists - and in the case of Liverpool, a GIS database[4] – represented useful resources. In turn, these were used to characterise an area's capacity to generate social capital and related functions, both those which are active and that which could be seen as having the potential to affect an area's propensity to develop a similar function. Among those measures included were religious facilities other than those related to the respective Catholic church's in each parish, including synagogues, parochial centres, clubs, temples, missions and other such facilities. Other indicators used were, proximity to - and numbers of – health clinics, housing offices, post offices, retail centres, youth and community facilities, schools, health facilities, leisure facilities, public houses, swimming pools and early year facilities. Although,

[4] The Strategic Policy Unit of Liverpool City Council provided relevant material from a SUMMIT database

because of access to a GIS database of community facilities, the Liverpool parishes provide a more detailed picture than that of Dublin and Birmingham – where no similar sources of data was available – as detailed as possible a picture of indicators in the parishes is still developed within these two sites using council lists and anecdotal evidence from the interviews. These indicators are mapped for each parish in the following case study chapters.

9. Critical discussion of the decision path involved with the methodology

As suggested above, some of these processes have already been highlighted, namely the selection of semi-stuctured interviews. Yet there were other important resepects in which certain decisions had to be made which influenced the trajectory of the study significantly. In practice what this meant was that very often distinct delineations had to be made in relation to what the study could actually gauge in a tangible sense. In other words, this relates to what the limits of the study can be perceived to be. With regard to this, it can be stated that a number of additional factors defined the nature of the material recovered and, consequently, the interpretational as well as conceptual limits of the study. Nonetheless, these decisions are justified here within the context of a defined framework of induction, which sort to provide a grounded interpretation of certain aspects of a social phenomenon. The choice of indicators of social capital was the main example of this. These indicators were used in order to provide a comparative picture of stocks of social capital-related features between parishes and diocese (how this worked in practice was discussed in the previous section.) However, it is also realised that these, at best, should be seen as representational of potential activity, hence the use of the term 'capacity' in relation to the indicators. What these cannot be seen as representative of, is social capital *per se*, that is, a direct measurement of social capital. Again, such an approach is justified in this context as possibly one of the only means of gaining a geographic – as opposed to distinctly spatial – notion of social capital. As a result of this compromise certain other features were also precluded. Namely, the rate of activity within indicators. Although, again, this can be justified in similar terms as those made above as offering a representation of potential social capital development which, by nature, has the potential to be utilised by a more varied cross section of residents the wider the number of

functions they represent, whether in terms of credit unions or social groups which target a specific demographic, young, old or mixed. However, Jupp's (1999) recent study[5] highlights the cleavage that can exist between capacity and activity of this nature. Alternately, the indicators used here could be interpreted as offering an impression of something subtly different, although nonetheless integral to, social capital, namely sociality or even sociability.[6] When viewed in these terms the indicators attain a new cogency and validity suggesting that maybe social capital is too generous a terms to use in relation to these indicators. However, having said this, it could also be argued that sociality is just another aspect of social capital anyway, a more easily measurable one. Part of the problem lies in what can best be described as the 'nebulous' nature of the concept. In fact, Chapter Nine suggests that social capital may best be seen as a generic term which incorporates aspects of social phenomena which can both aid and be representative of collective action, cognitive processes such as trust and social structures such as networks – including networks representative of sociability. In terms of justifying this approach it could also be suggested that through the process of reducing abstractions with a particularly nebulous concept such as social capital, this study offers a first step, one which admittedly needs refining, but one which nonetheless is valid in problematizing existing conceptions and suggesting in a preliminary sense new ways of representing a complex social phenomenon.

Another factor that was omitted – again, only after very careful consideration – was the surrounding social context of the parish groups, institutions within the parishes that performed similar or related roles and functions to those of the church-based indicators. Most notably here were local councils. Once again, this has to be seen as influencing the picture that emerged through the study, limiting its scope and undoubtedly offering the possibility of an incomplete or even skewed picture. Yet there were a number of reasons for this omission. Firstly, in a practical sense, many of the parishes were simply devoid of other such agencies – particularly

[5] Jupp's study showed that despite the existence of a rich diversity of locally-based groups, participation rates were negligible suggesting that capacity is at best indicative in some instances

[6] This is the interpretation favoured by Portes (1999) who suggests that sociability is one of the main interpretations employed by commentators on social capital, others including notions of social control as well as familial ties.

those in more suburban areas – indeed this was often noted by respondents during interviews as a reason for church-based activity. Where such agencies and groups were in evidence defining who should be spoken to proved an extremely difficult if not impossible process. In the case of Birmingham, attempts were made to contact council representatives who possessed knowledge and understanding of church-based and other activities within certain areas but, in each case, no such actor could be identified. However, even if it had proven possible the significance of a limited representation of such respondents from a few parishes would, at best, be open to question. Secondly, once the limitations both logistical and conceptual were realised, a conscious decision to highlight the factors behind the development of indicators of sociability within the parishes from the perspective of those directly involved in their development was taken. A redefinition was made, one, which set the parameters of the study in a distinct manner. Yet this still offers the potential for further work to assess the influence of other agencies, for the purpose of this study it was simply seen as unfeasible. Other issues which the methodological limits of the study necessitated only a cursory examination of issues such as gender, sexuality and ethnicity as they related to the notion of inclusivity with regards to participation in church-oriented indicators of social capital. As important as these issues are, it was felt that to avoid losing definition of what was after all the primary concern of the study, namely the development of spatial interpretations of social capital, these issues would be dealt with latter. In order to do these topics justice, Chapter Nine develops a more in-depth appraisal of these factors, mostly in relation to secondary sources but also relating back to examples from the study. Moreover, the following section addresses the issue of how social capital was operationalised for the purpose of the study.

10. Coding and choice of coding scheme

As previously suggested, this particular study utilised both qualitative and quantitative data sources as part of a triangulation strategy intended to endorse the reliability of the material collated from both sources. The analysis of the qualitative component of this process raised a number of issues that it is important to discuss in some detail.

> The initial stage when faced with an interview transcript, or with a set of notes describing observations, or some qualitative material, is to develop a set of codes that both reflect the initial aims of the research project, and take into account any unexpected issues that have emerged during data collection. Unlike the classic quantitative survey, where the aims of the research project stay relatively fixed from beginning to end, qualitative research can often be more exploratory, and can end up addressing issues that were not imagined before the project began. (Seale and Kelly, 1998 p.153).

The first of these concerns the particular analytical approach that was to be adopted. In the context of this particular study, whilst no one approach was adopted wholesale – rather, a number of elements are used in conjunction – the particular approach which bears the most relation to the analytical process used is the strategy of analytical induction or grounded theory (Huber, 1995; Strauss, 1987) there being a number of reasons for this. The first of these is that such an approach is grounded in a schema that attempts to construct a logical framework through the narratives and transcriptions facilitated by the coding of responses into categories and sub-categories. This provided an opportunity to assess both the interconnectedness and relevance of specific issues that were defined in this schema, as well as adapt it as new aspects emerged. Another factor is that, unlike a more selectively theoretical approach which can be subject to a significant degree of bias, illustrative narratives and quotations can be seen to reflect the overall picture presented by the interview process rather than a few quotations selected simply because they corroborate the researcher's arguments. Moreover, as already suggested, it also offers a degree of flexibility in the analytical process.

However, as already emphasised, grounded theory was only used as a guide or general indicator in the analytical process rather than as an immutable and definitive framework. There was a degree of benefit from keeping the process as simple and straightforward as possible since, as Bryman and Burgess (1995) point out, there is considerable potential for confusion with regards to this element of the study as there is a large degree of variability in terms of how researchers employ the procedure and what process they actually follow, with the result that there is no general orthodoxy or rule-of-thumb. In an attempt to avoid such confusion, a relatively basic but functional coding scheme was employed, illustrated on the diagram on the

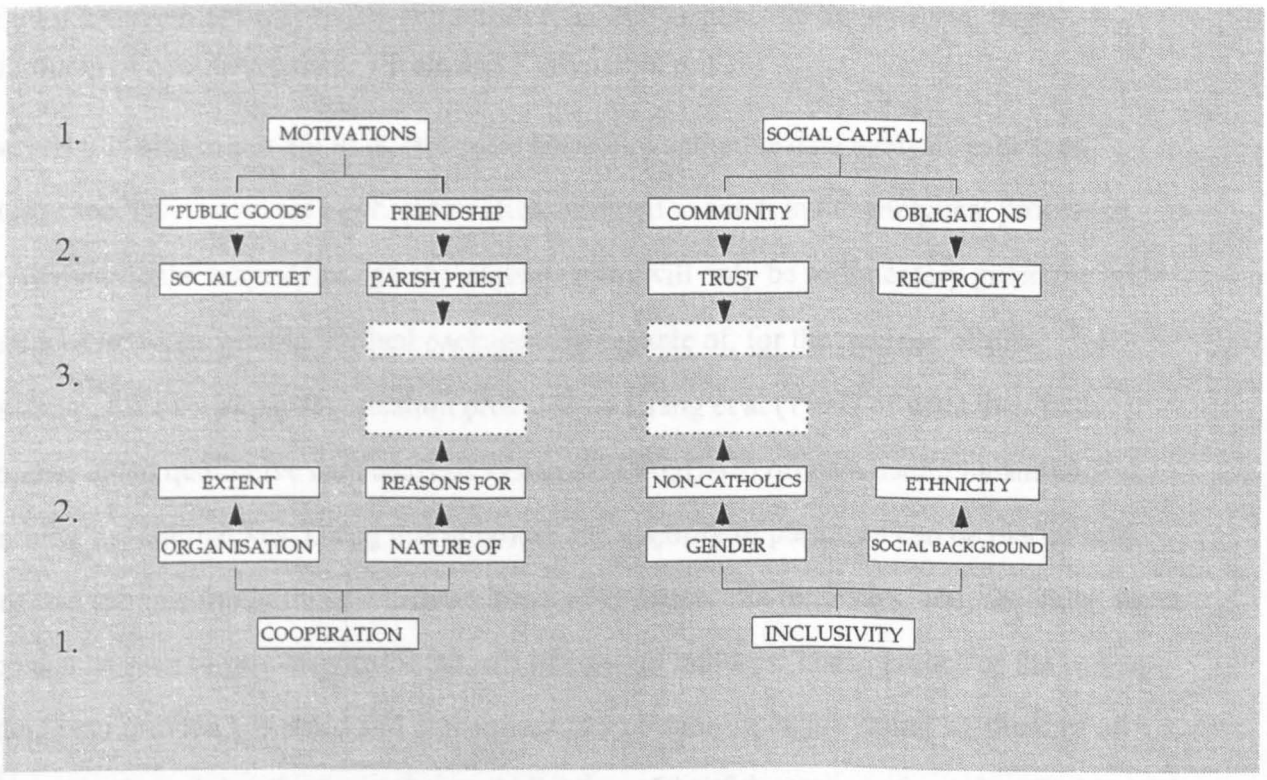
following page (Figure 6), composed of both axial and subordinate categories. For their part, the axial or main categories reflected the five questions fundamental to the study. In turn, the subordinate categories aimed to highlight the linkages or interconnectedness of certain issues. As the diagram suggests, the coding process was used to extract passages and quotes relevant to the axial and subordinate categories. These in turn were subject to a process of 'counting', or an assessment of frequency in occurrence, which aided the development of a valid and logical argument.

The incremental process of theory-development through the interview process was also facilitated by the subsequent addition or even removal of certain categories that emerged in importance during this process. With regard to the actual mechanics of the coding process, the researcher was presented with a number of alternatives. The first of these can be termed 'manual' and involves either the process of cutting and pasting sections of printed text (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Richards, 1995; Seale & Kelly, 1998) or, as is more likely the case, the use of word-processing packages to highlight and paste sections of transcribed text according to the above coding scheme. Alternately, a number of software packages – including Nu.dist and Ethnograph – exist which can aid the process (Crang et al, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Seale & Kelly, 1998; Strauss, 1989). The following section examines these and other packages and discusses their relative merit in the context of this study.

11. Qualitative packages

The use of computer aided analysis of the type offered by packages such as Nud.ist and Ethnograph, among others, presents an alternative from the manual approach described above. The aim of this section is to provide an appraisal of the utility of one or another such packages for the purpose of this study by examining the literature that exists concerning their use, particularly in a geographical context. Such packages can offer a range of benefits that can alleviate the laboriousness of the analytical process as well as acting as a tool in the development of theory. The use of computer aided analysis has proliferated in recent years as part of a wider trend within the social sciences:

Figure 6: Coding scheme for semi-structured interviews



1. Axial codes
2. Secondary codes
3. Incremental codes

> Although not as widespread as the use of statistical packages, the use of computers to analyse qualitative data has been growing in popularity amongst social researchers who find it a convenient way to file and retrieve, as well as generate theory from, large amounts of qualitative data. (Seale and Kelly, 1998 p. 124)

However, it is also important to differentiate between qualitative data analysis packages because each has its own set of characteristics designed to assist in the analytical process in their own particular way. Although any classification will only be rudimentary given the wide differences between what individual packages are capable of, for the purpose of this assessment, the two-step categorisation provided by Crang et al (1997) of what they term 'computer aided qualitative data analysis systems' (CAQDAS) offers a useful means of examining the alternatives. Using this approach the majority of packages can be placed into one of two groups; firstly those which are ostensibly coders and retrievers, and; secondly, those which can be seen to primarily fulfil the role of concept builders. The approach of the concept builders is to provide key word and phrase searches of transcripts, providing a summary of occurrences, thus giving the researcher an indication of fruitful avenues of enquiry. Coders and retrievers such as Ethnograph and Nud.ist adopt a different approach in that their primary purpose is to search material for strings of related codes which have already designated by the researcher in a grounded theory approach, as discussed already.

Obviously this presents a far more satisfactory approach to manually cutting out segments from transcripts and sorting them into piles according to a particular coding scheme, although it is also true to say that the widespread use of flexible word processing packages which allow pasting and cutting of large sections of text, tends to limit the extent to which this is a significant problem anymore. Another important consideration is that whilst the processes which follow from the coding process can be speeded up considerably by the use of these packages, as Bryman & Burgess (1994) point out, the coding process itself remains a time consuming and laborious process. It is also important to ask the question of what benefits could the use of such qualitative packages bring to a study which incorporates both socioeconomic material and a spatial dimension. Currently at least the options in this respect seem to be somewhat limited:

> To date, no program offers to connect qualitative materials to spatial sociodemographic data.... Likewise, no CAQDAS has emulated the systems being developed by local authorities and libraries to link pictures, places and descriptions into virtual polimsests about landscapes. (Crang et al, 1997 p.781)

A number of these problems may have resulted from the basic inception of the packages, that is, as a tool with which to increase the reliability and validity of qualitative as opposed to quantitative data (a particular bugbear of some researchers and a limiting factor in its acceptance.) Consequently packages have emerged as 'cure-all' responses, attempting to gain acceptability by 'quantifying' the qualitative data through processes such as 'counting' (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Seale & Kelly, 1998) whilst Crang et al (1997) also make the point that although such packages are particularly useful when coping and with and ordering large amounts of qualitative material, they have their limitations:

> ...we are also concerned about the downsides of CAQDAS: particularly that it provides an illusory order; and that it encourages the researcher to collect more material rather than think more creatively with existing material. So, we remain somewhat ambivalent about CAQDAS. We are also more realistic in our expectations. It is clear that such packages do not provide a miracle solution for the problems of qualitative research – the researcher still has to work out the appropriate level of abstraction, for instance – and many of the functions they offer are unlikely to be used by any one researcher. (Crang et al, 1997 p.782).

Basic misgivings also exist in relation to the recognition of nuances of intonation, emphasis placed by respondents upon certain words and phrases, even a statement made in jocularity rather than in sincerity, can all have a distinct impact upon the entire interpretation and meaning of a passage of verbal interaction as characterised within the interview process, and although certain packages allow a limited coding of such facets, such an omission would be particularly disagreeable to more textural, discourse oriented research. These aspects highlight the difficulty in utilising what essentially remains a quantitative tool in the process of qualitative research. It ignores the depth of meaning in material by only grabbing the functional aspects of responses, the repetition of certain words and phrases. In addition, the process may be further complicated in instances where incomplete recordings have been made, or indeed

where no recording has been made at all, compromising the essentially uniform requirement with regard to data in the process. These factors tend to limit the usefulness or even appropriateness of such packages in the analytical process of small-scale research of the nature of this particular study and consequently a more traditional manual approach to the coding process was seen as more appropriate here, both because of the relatively limited number of transcripts as well as the greater degree of nuance a more personal approach could provide, not to mention the manner in which this process can also prove valuable in prompting the theory building process on the part of a lone researcher.

12. Validity, generalisability, verification and reliability

The issues of validity and reliability have already been dealt with to some degree, however it is important to expand further upon their significance to the research process, which can be see as being twofold in nature. Not only do these factors define the rigour of the research process, whether it involve quantitative, qualitative or a combination of these elements, but they also impinge upon factors such as replicability and relevance. Erlandson, (1993) and others (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) have reinterpreted these issues to be more relevant to a qualitative framework using terminology such as 'trustworthiness' and authenticity' when referring to the veracity of such work. In a similar manner this study adopted a strategy which is aimed at maximising the trustworthiness and authenticity of its empirical elements.

The first aspect of this process concerns internal validity or the accuracy of the empirical material and extent to which it provides a 'true' – or true as possible – picture of reality (Mermen, 1988). The first element in this process is the triangulation of material from a variety of sources. In this instance a particular strength of the study was that it incorporated both qualitative and quantitative material which allowed a degree of verification to take place as a function of this. It is also important to highlight what could be seen as the limited generalizability of findings from the research process, or what could be termed it's external validity (Babbie, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Oppenheim, 1993; Yin, 1993). This is more relevant to the qualitative aspects of the study and could also be seen as an issue inherent to this particular methodology which is more concerned with providing a unique interpretation of

events rather than a generalizable set of results. However, the limited nature also defines how the results can and should be viewed and interpreted.

13. Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to outline the main methodological considerations that are integral to the empirical study that follows. In the first instance it was suggested that the selection of any methodology should be seen as a natural outcome of the questions which were being asked. The discussion highlighted how it was felt that the most valuable approach to addressing the main thesis questions was to adopt what was termed a 'nuanced' approach which incorporated both qualitative and quantitative elements. Although this did not fall within the discrete methodological boundaries highlighted by Babbie (1997) and Oppenheim (1993), it pointed to a more integrative approach as suggested by Soloman (1991) and others (Creswell, 1996; Strauss, 1987). The thesis questions were seen to fall into two loosely defined sub-sets, those which required a more formal standardised approach to the retrieval of material and those which required a more direct level of interplay between the researcher and the participants within the parishes. With regard to the former, it was suggested that the interview technique would prove of greatest value in the research process. After a brief exposition of the various interpretations of the technique, the value of the semi-structured interview was highlighted and expanded upon. This included a discussion of procedure and transcription process as well as an account of how the field works strategy worked in practice.

The importance of negotiating status with the clergy, as representative of a distinct social group, through the interview process was also highlighted in some detail. Next there was a critical discussion of the decision paths taken in the selection of approaches and procedures. The issue of analysis was then discussed, and the concept of grounded-theory as a basis for empirical research introduced. In turn, the issue of whether computer aided analysis should be used in this process was raised and assessed in some depth, ultimately yielding the opinion that such packages as Nud.ist and Ethnograph are more appropriate to large scale projects which seek less refined material that often demands a level of statistically-based reliability. The choice of fieldwork sites was then discussed and the procedure for the choice of parishes in

Liverpool, Birmingham and Dublin outlined. The standardised element of the empirical study was then discussed and the use of small area statistics relating both to social and economic characteristics as well as indicators of social capital were outlined. An important element of this involved an exposition of how social capital was to be quantified for the purpose of the study. In this way this chapter provides the background to the empirical chapters which follow and which form the basis for this study, the first of which examines the findings for the Birmingham case study.

Chapter 6: The Birmingham Case Study

1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to document the procedures involved in, and the picture that emerged, from, an in-depth and intensive analysis of four Catholic parishes in the diocese of Birmingham. This was designed to shed light upon the thesis questions highlighted at the end of the last chapter and which emerged through the conceptual discussion in Chapters Two, Three and Four. These define the main themes of the study and as such warrant being reiterated here. The first area of investigation pinpointed was the identification of social capital-related activity within each parish. A second area of concern for the study, in turn, is to pinpoint the factors responsible for the pattern of activity within and between parishes. Another concern is the identification of evidence of interaction between the Church's parish-based structures of social capital and other networks. Finally, this study will also look at the extent to which the benefits of church-related social capital are experienced by the wider communities within each parish. These are placed within the wider consideration of the Church's role, potential and realised, in the addressing the issue of social exclusion, as discussed in Chapter Four. In turn, as outlined in the previous chapter, this initially involves the profiling of each parish to provide both a comparative and generalisable context for the semi-structured interviews. Through this process, four distinct sites are defined, A to D, the main characteristics of which are as follows:

A) A large parish, in a deprived area, within which the comparatively low number of indicators suggest that the church is not a significant producer of social capital-oriented benefits. (Figure 7).

B) A medium sized parish, displaying no indicators of disadvantage, within which the high number of parish-based activities suggests a considerable capacity to produce social capital on the part of the church. (Figure 8).

C) Another medium sized parish, although this time situated in a deprived part of the city, within which the low number of indicators suggests a reduced capacity to create social capital. (Figure 8).

D) One of the larger parishes in the Birmingham diocese, situated in a relatively deprived ward within which there is a distinct ethnic split between residents, within which the number of activities is indicative of a high level of social capital. (Figure 10).

Next, the responses from the semi-structured interviews conducted within each parish are discussed. Following from this, the major trends to emerge through the interviews are highlighted. These are then related back to the theoretical work of Coleman (1988;1990) and others (Fox, 1996; Leadbeater, 1997; Putnam, 1993) to gauge its relevance. The main arguments are summarised at the end. The first sections below detail the process of profiling the four parishes.

2. Social and economic profile, Parish A

Parish A in Birmingham serves a Catholic population of approximately 4150 and is situated in an electoral ward to the south of the city centre. The Catholic parish has been in place since 1957 and has been served by its current parish priest since 1990. It is an ethnically divided community with a distinct split between the majority population of around 56%, who are classified as being of 'Asian extraction', and the remaining inhabitants, who fall into the 'white' classification of ethnicity used by the census. Moreover, this picture reflects the steady increase in the Asian population over the last three decades within the ward. In turn, as Figure 1 shows, the area displays a high degree of unemployment which is particularly marked among the young, although there was a slight improvement in the overall employment rate between 1981 and 1991. Those in work are largely engaged in manual low paid work with a minority engaged in the service sector.

The ward also contains a disproportionate number of elderly people which, in turn, probably goes some way in accounting for the fact that one fifth of its residents suffer from some form of long-term illness. Owner-occupancy is also very low with a large proportion of the population being housed in council accommodation and indicators such as car ownership suggesting a low level of disposable income from the residents in the ward. Among the indicators of social capital in the ward are two Primary schools affiliated, respectively, to the Catholic and Anglican Church's, as well as a mosque and Anglican chapel (Table 2).

Figure 7: Photographic plate, Birmingham Parish A

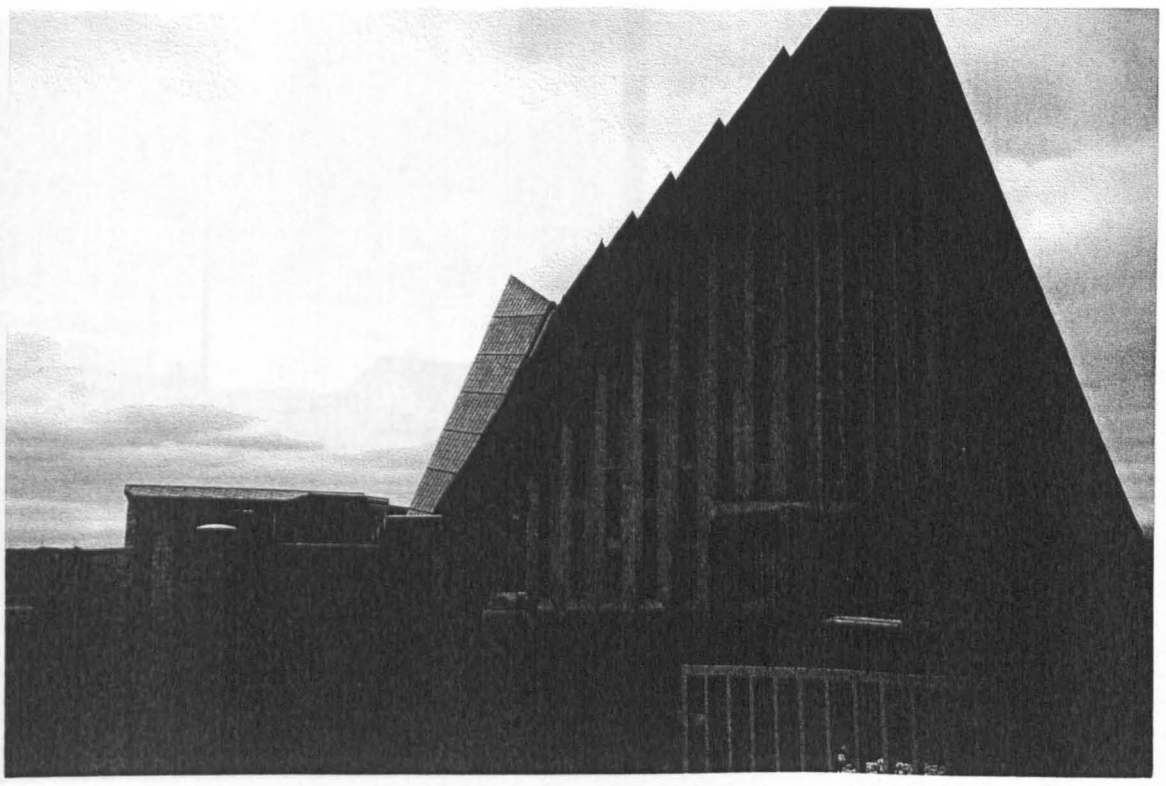


Figure 8: Photographic plate, Birmingham Parish B

Figure 9: Photographic plate, Birmingham Parish C

Figure 10: Photographic plate, Birmingham Parish D

Table 1. Indicators of deprivation

Indicator / Ward	Un(%)[1]	Acc Am[2]	Lone Pens[3]	Lone Par[4]	Ov Cr[5]
Parish A	27.0	2.9	23.9	11.9	2.9
Parish B	11.9	0.3	7.1	0.9	0.7
Parish C	17.3	1.7	12.2	3.07	1.09
Parish D	17.5	2.7	24.8	12.2	3.09
Av Birmingham[6]	**21.1**	**2.05**	**17.5**	**8.7**	**2.45**

Notes:

1.total unemployment rate, 1991 (%)
2. residents without exclusive use of amenities, 1991
3. households with 1 or more pensioners only, 1991
4. households with 1 adult only with child(ren) aged 0-15,1991
5. average household size, 1991
6. ward average for city of Liverpool

(Source: Census of population, 1991)

Table 2 Indicators of social capital, Birmingham Parishes

Indicator[1]	Parish A	Parish B	Parish C	Parish D
1. Religious facilities[2]	4/3	2/2	3/1	4/4
2. Health clinics	1	×	1	1
3. Housing offices	1	×	1	1
4. Post offices	1	2	2	2
5. Retail centres	1	1	2	1
6. Youth and Community Facilities	1	1	1	×
7. Primary schools	1	1	1	1
8. Secondary schools	1	1	2	2
9. Leisure facilities	×	×	×	×
10. Public houses	3	2	4	4
11. Early Year facilities	×	×	1	×
12. Health facilities	×	×	×	×
13. Swimming pools	×	×	×	×
Total	14	13	22	12

Notes.
1. numbers correspond to those in Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10 on the following pages
2. first number in cell indicates church or chapel whilst second indicates hall or community centre

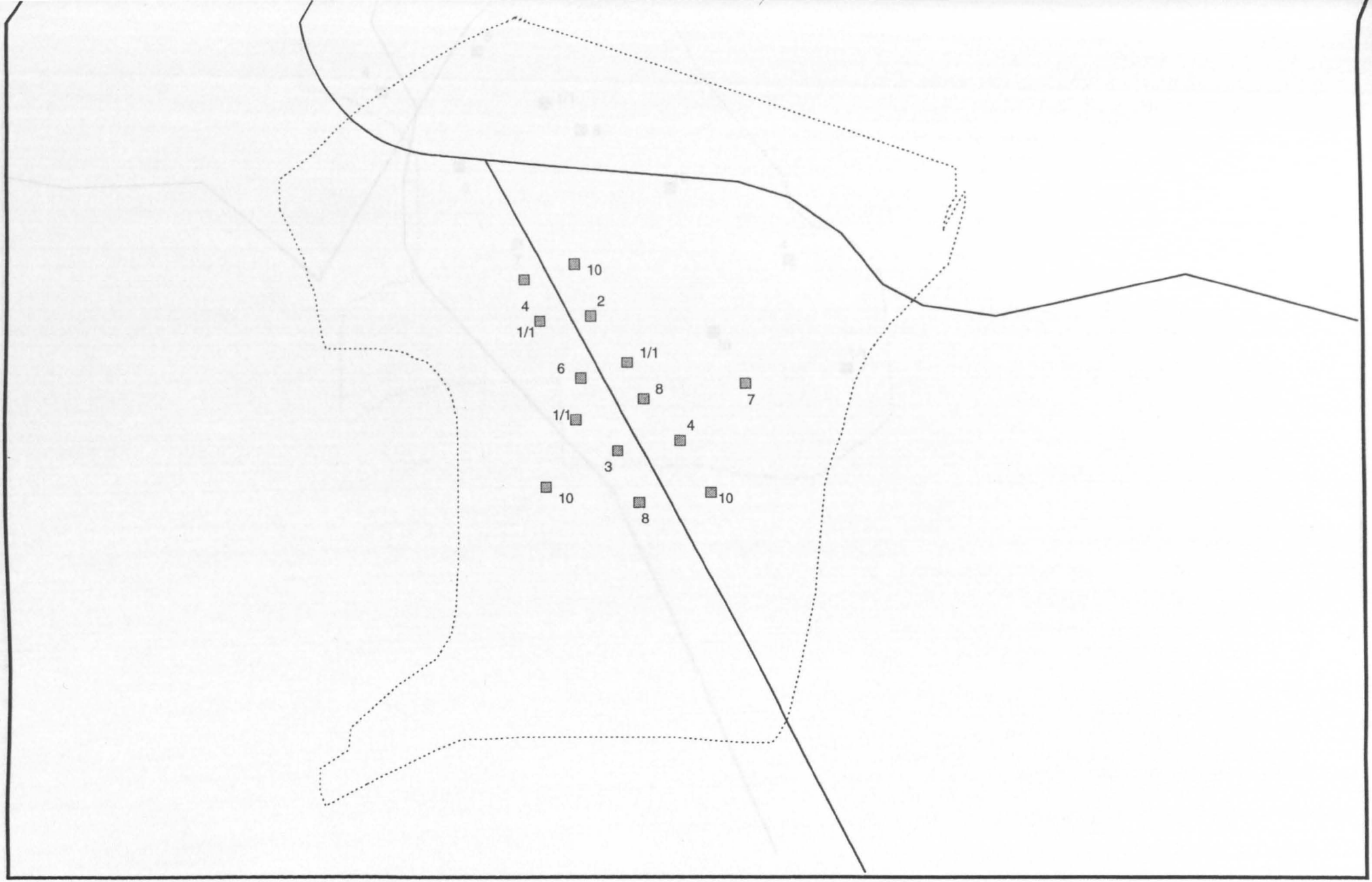


Figure 11. Indicators of social capital, Birmingham Parish A

Figure 12. Indicators of social capital, Birmingham Parish B

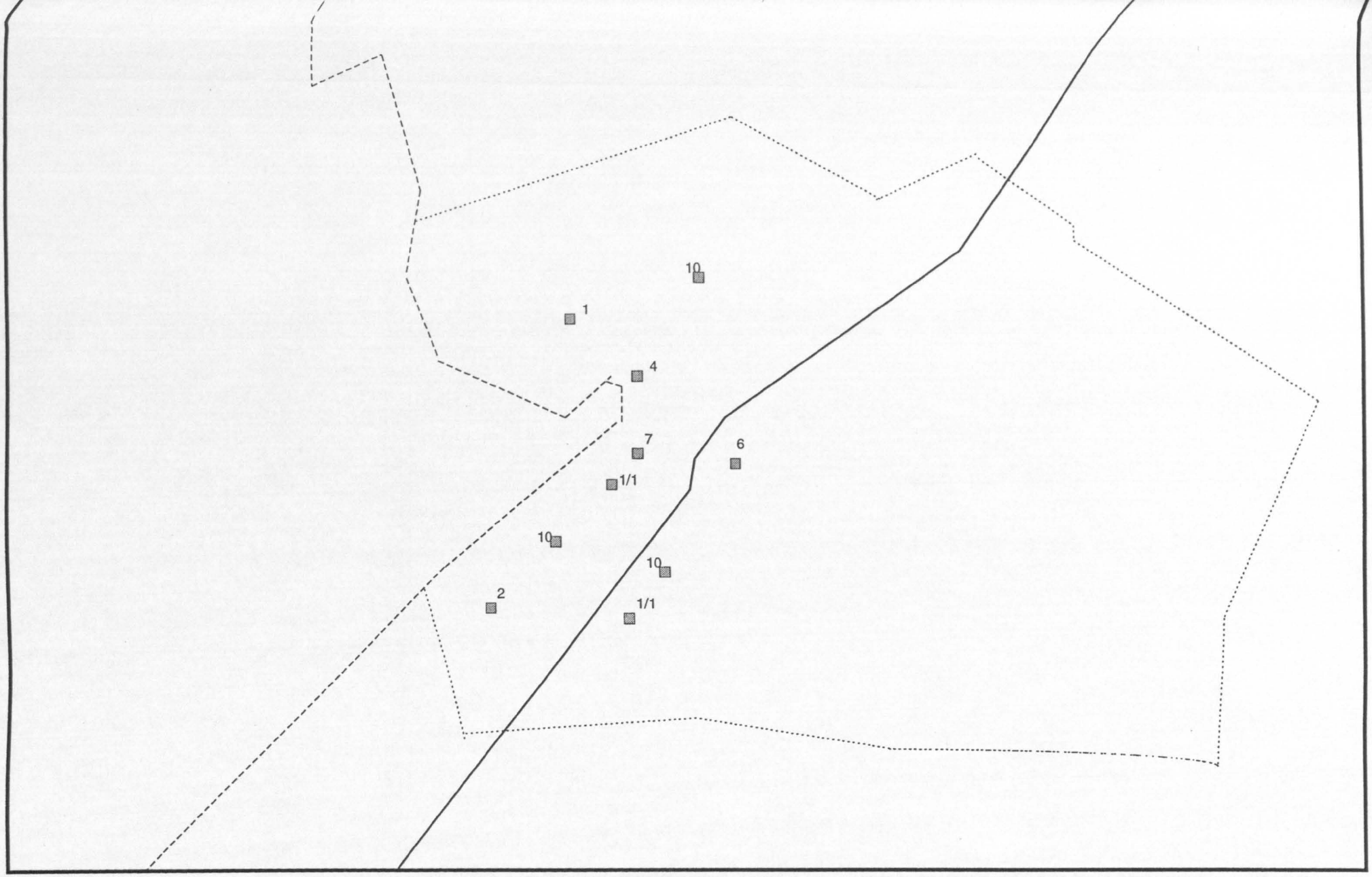


Figure 13. Indicators of social capital, Birmingham Parish C

Figure 14. Indicators of social capital, Birmingham Parish D

Table 3. Church-affiliated groups, nature of, and individuals interviewed

Catholic Parish	Parish A	Parish B	Parish C	Parish D
Catholic population	4,150	3,000	3,000	4,000
	MT Grp*	MT Grp*	Yth Grp*	Yth Grp*
	Yth Club*	JYth Grp*	LM*	SVP*
	Ov 60's Clb*	SYth Grp	UCM	L of C*
	CU*	S Cit Clb	CD Grp*	LM*
	LM	Ppl L Dis		JP Grp
	Ph Soc Aps	SPRED*		UCM
	UCM*	Prsh Cncil		Lads Gld
		SVP*		CW Lgue*
		LM		Se Cit Clb
		JP Group*		MT Grp*
		SAC*		Widows Grp
		Cov*		G for H*
		Hday Proj*		KINMOS*
		Parish Hall*		
Total Interviews	4	9	3	8

Note: asterix indicates when an individual was interviewed, shaded cells indicate groups which perform a largely social or welfare function whilst unshaded indicate those with an overtly religious or ceremonial aspect

Abbreviations:

MT Grp	Mother and Toddler Group
Yth Club	Youth Club
Ov 60s Clb	Over 60's Club
CU	Credit Union
LM	Legion of Mary
Ph Soc Aps	Parish Social Apostolate
JP	Justice and Peace Group
CD Grp	Christman Dinner Group
LM	Legion of Mary
SAC	Collection Group for CAFOD
Cov	Covenant with Council of Local Churches
Hday Proj	Annual Exchange Holiday Project
Lads Gld	Ladies Guild
CW Lgue	Catholic Women's League
SVP	St. Vincent de Paul Society
UCM	Union of Catholic Mothers
Se Cit Clb	Sebior Citizens Club
Widows Grp	Bereavement Group
G for H	Group for the Handicapped
KINMOS	Daily Drop-in Centre
Prsh Hall	Parish Hall
L of C	Ladies of Charity
Prsh Cncil	Parish Council

In turn, the local council's presence within the ward is served by a neighbourhood centre, whilst its health requirements are addressed by a neighbourhood clinic. As Table 3 indicates, the Catholic church, in turn, maintains a number groups and clubs within the ward which address a variety of needs. Most of these are self explanatory, such as the mother and toddler group, youth club, over 60's club, and credit union. In conjunction with these, there are those groups which are more explicitly related to the spiritual side of the Church's role, such as a branch of the Legion of Mary – which is a diocese wide association which undertakes home visits to the sick and elderly within parishes – a parish social apostolate, which works for the poor and needy, as well as a branch of the Union of Catholic Mothers, which undertakes a variety of charitable and social functions within the parish.

3. Social and economic profile, Parish B

Parish B, in contrast, serves a Catholic population of around 3000 and is situated in a suburban ward to the south east of the Birmingham. This parish has been in place since 1979 and it's current cleric has been in the parish since 1985. In contrast to parish A, the ethnic picture is relatively homogenous in nature, with the majority being classified as 'white' in relation to their ethnicity. In turn, the last three decades has witnessed a significant increase in the percentage of residents between the ages of 0-15 and 16-44 with the result that the demography of the ward is relatively young in nature. Unemployment rates for the ward are relatively low, at around 12% (Table 1), this picture having improved slightly since 1981. The majority of those employed are engaged in skilled and semi-skilled occupations and a small minority engaged in the service sector.

Although owner-occupancy is relatively high at 36%, there is a significant number of residents who are in rented accommodation as well as a significant number in council accommodation. In terms of social and other amenities in the ward, the community is relatively poorly served with no neighbourhood centre and few community care facilities (Table 2). In turn, there are three schools in the ward – two Secondary and one Primary – which serve the local community. As well as the Catholic church there are also Methodist and Baptist ministries within the ward which maintain their own social clubs (Table 2). In turn, Table 3 shows that the Catholic

church maintains a number of groups and clubs within the parish. Among these are a mother and toddler group, junior and senior youth groups, a senior citizen's club, a group for children with learning disabilities, as well as a parish council.

4. Social and economic profile, Parish C

Parish C in Birmingham serves a Catholic population of approximately 3000 and is situated in a semi-suburbanised electoral ward with a population of some 12,378 to the south west of the city. This parish has been in place since 1964 and its current priest has served there since 1983. The population is classified as predominantly 'white' with Asian and other ethnic groups in a minority. In turn, as shown in Table 1, the area has a relatively low level of unemployment at 17.3%, a figure which has remained relatively constant over the last two decades. Those in work are largely engaged in semi-skilled and service sector activities, with a small minority in skilled and managerial occupations. The ward also contains a relatively high number of people between the ages of 60/65 and 74. Tenancy in the ward is divided relatively evenly between privately rented, council and owner-occupancy. Indicators such as car ownership suggest a reasonable level of affluence among the residents of the ward.

In terms of social and other amenities, the parish also contains two Primary schools, one Catholic the other state run (Table 2). In addition to the Catholic church there is also an Anglican ministry in the ward which has its own parish hall which is used for social purposes by the wider community. These organisations comprise the chief instruments of social interaction and welfare in the ward. As in the previous parish, there is no neighbourhood centre and a lack of any community or health care facilities. The Catholic church, in turn, maintains a number of activities within the parish, including a Legion of Mary group and a branch of the Union of Catholic Mothers (Table 3).

5. Social and economic profile, Parish D

The final site, Parish D, serves a Catholic population of around 4000 and is situated in a ward to the south of the city centre. It has been in place since 1967 and its priest has served there since 1983. Similarly to parish A, the ethnic picture is relatively diverse, with the two largest groups being classified as 'Asian' and 'White', with the former being in a small majority. In

turn, the last two decades have witnessed a proportional increase in the Asian population within the ward. Whilst unemployment rates in the ward are relatively average at 17.5% (Table 1), there is a disproportionate number of younger people out of work. Moreover, the majority of those employed are engaged in semi-skilled and manual activities. The majority of the housing in the ward is rented accommodation from the council although a minority of 15% are owner- occupied. In terms of social and other amenities in the ward, the community is relatively well served with both a council run neighbourhood centre, which fulfils the dual role of a state welfare office and a community centre. In turn, there are three schools in the ward, a Primary and Secondary school run by the Catholic church as well as another, state-run, Secondary school. (Table 2).

As well as the Catholic church there is also an Anglican ministry, a mosque used by the Muslim population and a temple used by the Sikh inhabitants of the ward. Each of these has related facilities, usually consisting of a meeting area which is used for social and welfare activities. As Table 3 suggests, the Catholic church maintains a large number of activities within the parish, including a youth group, a branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a 'Ladies of Charity' group, a branch of the Legion of Mary, as well as a Justice and Peace group.

6. Distinctiveness of the Catholic population within the wards

In order to ascertain the degree to which the Catholic populations in each of the four wards reflected the socioeconomic and ethnic patterns highlighted above the data from the annual audit by the Legion of Mary groups at each of the sites was used. Although this data is relatively rudimentary, concentrating upon a limited number of variables such as population size, employment and housing, it offers a valuable medium for evaluating the distinctiveness of the Catholic populations in comparison with the other inhabitants of the wards. In socioeconomic terms this data suggested that the Catholic populations at all four sites were generally typical of the wider population in terms of employment type and rates, that is with the exception of parish B where the Catholic population displayed a disproportionate number of people in employment in professional occupations.

More significant is the picture when the ethnic make-up of the Catholic populations is examined. This is more apparent in parishes A and D where there are large number of Asian and other non-white ethnic groupings. The vast majority of the Catholic population at each site is white with only a very few instances of other ethnic groups being represented. What emerges then is a picture of a Catholic population which although it reflects the socioeconomic characteristics of it's wider community is culturally and ethnically distinct. A similar picture would undoubtedly emerge through an examination of Anglican and Methodist churches in the area although this factor may have significance for the degree to which the Church's social capital can be seen to be inclusive in these communities as examined in a later section .

7. Perceptions of respondents, Parish A

The respondents of this parish characterised it as an area which was both multi-cultural in nature and also relatively deprived. Unemployment, in particular, was emphasised as a problem. Despite the comparatively small number of parish-based activities, the cleric gave the impression through his responses that he did support the idea of a 'social' as well as 'spiritual' ministry within his parish. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) was highlighted as the justification for his views. In turn, on an individual basis he also suggested that he was active within the parish promoting cooperation with other religious leaders in the area over social issues and becoming involved in issues such as the single regeneration scheme which effected the area.

When asked why the church-based activities were relatively limited in comparison with other nearby parishes of comparable size, the priest suggested that these areas had the advantage of a large resident teaching population, associated with local Catholic schools. He believed that his capacity to increase the participative culture within the parish through the development of group activity was stunted by a lack of people with the appropriate people 'skills' to run such groups. Teachers, he suggested, were particularly adept at this because of their experience of organising groups and also were more inclined to participate because they tended to know a high percentage of parishioners, whether as their pupils or the parents of their pupils.

More generally, among parishioners, it was evident that a variety of factors had influenced their decision to participate in their respective groups. These included respondents who had

retired and saw involvement in parish activities as a way of using their time fruitfully. Others suggested that it provided them with an opportunity to socialise on a regular basis with their friends. One respondent, the parish sister, highlighted a more vocationally based reason, suggesting that she had become a nun with the view to 'help the needy', and that this was founded in a basic belief in Christian ethics.

One factor which distinguished this parish from the others studied in Birmingham was the integration of local residents into church-based activities. Groups such as the credit union, crèche and Over 60s club incorporated large numbers of non-Catholics, and in particular, residents drawn from the local Asian population. Moreover, cooperation with other organisations was also apparent in a number of ways. Among these was the St Vincent de Paul group, which maintained regular contact with the local neighbourhood centre with regard to benefit entitlements of parishioners. In turn, the parish credit union came under the umbrella organisation of the Birmingham Credit Union Association, which provided advice and resources. On a more negative note, the parish sister also recounted her failure to get grant aid from the local authority to develop the parish's crèche facilities.

8. Perceptions of respondents, Parish B

The priest at this site characterised his parish as being relatively affluent when compared to the wider local area. However, he also pointed out that whilst the majority of the houses were privately owned there was also a limited amount of council housing within the parish. It was his opinion that problems such as crime and unemployment, whilst apparent to an extent, were much less prevalent within the parish than in other areas of the city. In turn, when asked to characterise his own role within the parish the cleric responded that he saw the social needs of his parishioners as a central aspect of his ministry. Although he also expressed the view that he was limited in his capacity to act in developing this aspect of the parish due to the constraints placed upon his available time due to his ceremonial commitments as well as the administrative work involved with the parish. He defined his role more in terms of being a 'facilitator' of parish activities. This, he felt, involved helping when he could with providing funds for projects, making requests for help from the parishioners and providing facilities such

as the parish hall for activities and meetings. He attributed this interpretation of his role to the doctrine of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and in particular its 'preferential option for the poor'.

A large number of the respondents within this parish were also teachers at the nearby Catholic Secondary school. Anecdotal evidence also suggested that, more generally, teachers formed a core group of parish activists. The cleric, in particular, saw the presence of a large teacher population resident within the parish as a distinct advantage due to the 'personal' skills they were perceived to possess which made them a particularly valuable asset when organising and developing small groups within the parish. In providing further reasons for the role of teachers within his parish, the cleric suggested that many of them had a particular volition,

> Teachers who teach in Catholic schools have a basic commitment to the Church, you know, and they tend to be generous in the time that they give because their faith really means something to them and I think that because very often families and children are involved in parish activities they sort of naturally follow. We're very fortunate, we've got a very good Catholic teaching staff in our primary school. [Cleric, Parish B].

All the respondents at this location saw their priest as an active participant in the social aspects of their parish. However, the most common reason given by respondents in reply to the question of their motivations and influences in becoming involved in their respective groups tended to be either an obligation because their children were affected some way or a more general sense of duty. In turn, whilst most respondents were of the opinion that a sense of 'community' existed within the parish one notable exception rejected this notion and was of the opinion that a conservative element within the parishioners kept the parish's activities from becoming too socially responsive.

Evidence of interaction between parish-based activities and other local organisations was limited. As Table 2 highlighted, there were few other groups – voluntary or otherwise – in the immediate area around the parish, and this was reflected in the responses given by the interviewees. The consensus of opinion was that little opportunity existed for concerted interaction with other local groups. Meanwhile, the cleric accounted for the absence of any

cooperation between the parish and the local authority as resulting from the latter not having a neighbourhood centre in the local area,

> We haven't got one [Neighbourhood Centre] around here, there's one in [neighbouring ward] as well. No, it wouldn't come under our sort of catchment area. They don't provide many facilities the council in [parish D]. I think we're compensating for that. [Cleric, Parish B].

Although there was a consensus among respondents that they made no distinctions with regard to race, religion or gender, evidence of participation from non-Catholics was limited. Where it was apparent, to an extent, was in the youth club, with regard to which one respondent suggested that a large number of non-Catholic children were brought along by their Catholic friends. Others also suggested that the relative size of the parish – in tandem with its relatively isolated position – meant that the Catholic population tended to dominate local activities. An interesting turn of phrase was used by the parish priest when he said that there was 'no call for it' when asked why there was little integration. He also explained that he didn't really adhere to an ecumenical approach to parish development and this had framed his relations with other local churches.

9. Perceptions of respondents, Parish C

The cleric at this site characterised his parish as an area containing both council and privately owned housing in similar proportions. His interpretation of the social and economic conditions within the parish included the view that the area compared favourably with the rest of the city. He also thought that the social problems, such as homelessness and crime, were not as evident as in other areas of the city. His views largely reflect the parish profile for this site, as outlined in a previous section. The cleric was then asked how he perceived his own particular role within the parish, with particular reference to its social aspects. The cleric responded that there were no real social problems in the parish to address. He expressed the opinion that whilst the notion of a socially accountable Church was important in principle, there could be a danger in going too far and becoming politicised. When probed further to elaborate upon this response, the cleric argued that there was potential for the church to be drawn into areas which he thought were not its primary concern.

He was also asked about his own efforts – if any – to develop a more social ministry within his parish. His response was that he had not started any parish groups himself, one of the reasons being that he found it difficult to get his parishioners to take responsibility for activities which – due to his daily duties – he had little or no time to undertake himself. Little of what he termed 'communal spirit' was evident within the parish. He also saw the burden of the increasing administration related to running a parish as reducing his capacity to visit his parishioners in their homes, make contact with a view to discussing their concerns or worries and how they may be addressed. In turn, when asked what had prompted him to become involved in the running of the church-based social club, the other respondent in this parish suggested that he had seen it as an opportunity to 'keep busy' once he had retired. Furthermore, he characterised the constituents of the club as a cross-section of the residents of the local area and not exclusively Catholic. His opinion concerning a sense of community in the parish was that many people were too busy to give time to the parish and so over the years the number of activities had gradually declined.

10. Perceptions of respondents, Parish D

All the respondents were initially asked about their perceptions of their parish, what they saw as the main issues and concerns facing both the parishioners and the wider community they formed part of. In response to this particular question, the parish priest highlighted a range of what he termed 'urban' problems which characterised the area. These included drug related problems, as well as homelessness and high levels of unemployment. His interpretation is relatively consistent with the picture presented by the profile of the area. In turn, when questioned regarding his own role within the parish the cleric expressed the view that 'social ministry' was integral to his function within the parish, expressing this in the following terms:

> There will always be a great need for the Church to care for the person-the vagrant, the person its going to be that week, be it an alcoholic be it whatever, that the caring aspects of our society maybe cannot deal with as well, we have to be there available to them. [Cleric, Parish D].

When asked what had influenced him in this interpretation of his role he pointed to, what he termed, the 'more socially progressive' doctrine of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). He also

made reference to the current mood in the UK Church, which, he said, was one of responsiveness with regards to the key social issues. When asked about his own activities within the parish the cleric highlighted the issue of the homeless as a particular concern of his and one which he had identified as a key problem in his parish. This, he viewed, as a particularly pressing issue because it was often related to drug and alcohol abuse. The cleric conveyed how, in an attempt to address this problem, he had initiated a drop-in centre for the homeless which utilised space in the parish community centre. In conjunction with this, he took advantage of what he hoped was his trusted position, to offer counselling to individuals for their drug or alcohol addiction and encouraged his parishioners to become more involved in helping the homeless in a similar capacity. This process developed further and in conjunction with the local authority run neighbourhood centre, which, in conjunction with the parish, part-funded an improvement scheme for run-down council housing in the ward to make it fit for habitation by those undergoing drug rehabilitation.

The role of the cleric was also reflected in the responses given by other interviewees within the parish. He was often seen to have been a strong influence upon peoples decision to participate in a given capacity. Although, in addition to this, becoming active within the parish was also seen as a good opportunity to socialise with friends and, for certain individuals, to utilise free-time in a rewarding manner - one respondent had recently retired and found that he had a lot of spare time on his hands whilst another found herself in a similar position when her last child had left home. It was also apparent from the respondents that one sub-set of parishioners in particular was particularly active with regards to parish activities. These were teachers, or moreover, teachers at the local Catholic school who also lived within the parish. Indeed, this fact was also highlighted by the cleric, who suggested that he was particularly 'lucky' to have access to so many individuals who possessed the skills to organise and run parish activities, by virtue of their experience of dealing with people from a variety of backgrounds. In turn, responses suggested that to many, a sense of community centred around the church was apparent, largely relating to the local Catholic school, and the interaction of parents, pupils and the teachers - who ran many of the groups in the parish - this institution prompted.

The extent to which parish-based activities incorporated the local residents more generally differed. It was suggested that the religiously oriented prayer group was unlikely to attract non-Catholics anyway. However, other respondents suggested that the social clubs and youth groups attracted constituents more generally from the local population, many coming along at the behest of their Catholic friends. The cleric also highlighted that the drop-in centre worked on the basis of non-distinction, no-one was asked what their religious preference – if any at all – was, and all were treated equally. In turn, cooperation between parish-based activities and similar local groups and agencies was confined to the housing initiative which, as already suggested, was achieved in cooperation with the wards neighbourhood centre. Moreover, a high degree of interaction was also apparent between the local Catholic school and the parish, mostly through the activities of teachers and the parents of children in groups such as the cubs, scouts and youth clubs as well as other capacities.

11. Semi-structured interviews: main trends and features

One of the more obvious trends to emerge through the interview process was the significant involvement of teachers in parish based groups, and activities in general. This was particularly pertinent to parishes B and D. The clerics at these respective sites both saw the proximity of a school affiliated to the church as beneficial to their capacity to maintain and develop parish activities. This contrasted with the picture at parishes A and C, the former possessing only a primary school and the latter no school at all. Both clerics at these two sites, in turn, saw the relatively large proportion of those involved in the teaching profession in other parishes as a distinct advantage they did not possess. The larger parishes tended to benefit in this way because they were more likely to have a denominationally based Primary – and even Secondary – school in close proximity, warranted by the existence of a large Catholic population of school age in such areas.

Clerics in the more 'active' parishes A, B and D interpreted the social aspect of their ministry in terms of the development of a participative culture within their respective parishes. They also showed evidence that they had made considerable efforts at co-ordinated activity within their parishes. The cleric in the relatively in-active parish D put less emphasis upon his 'duty'

to maintain a social element to his ministry. Instead, he placed more emphasis on his ceremonial and spiritual role within the parish. The social development of his parishioners was something he acknowledged but which he did not see as a priority. This pattern did not appear to be related either to the size of the respective parishes or the dominant socioeconomic conditions. In turn, there was consensus among the four parish priests that time constraints was the main limiting factor upon their development of parish based groups. This was usually related to commitments to perform church services and ceremonies, including weddings, christenings and funerals. The size of the parish tended to be influential here because larger ones had assistant clerics who performed some of the functions of the parish.

Evidence of interaction between church-based groups and other organisations within three of the four parishes, B, C and D, was limited. Parish A, situated in one of the more deprived – as well as culturally diverse areas – was the exception however. A number of respondents here highlighted frequent interaction with other local groups and agencies. The credit union, in particular, was affiliated to an 'umbrella' organisation which provided advice and resources for credit unions in the whole of the city. As a consequence of this the parish-based group had links with other local unions and shared resources and collection points. In turn, the council run neighbourhood centre in the ward was utilised by members of the St Vincent de Paul group to get advice for parishioners on benefits and housing issues. In turn, other respondents conveyed how they also worked in the local neighbourhood charity shop. The parish priest was also involved in a number of neighbourhood based forums concerning a variety of local issues and attended a monthly meeting between local religious leaders, drawn both from the Christian and Muslim communities, which discussed areas of common concern in the area.

All respondents expressed the view that although their groups were church-based, they were open to members of the wider community. In practice, Catholics usually dominated the groups, clubs and societies. Non-Catholics tended to be most apparent in the social clubs and youth groups where they formed a significant minority. In turn, they were least apparent in groups which had an explicitly religious dimension, such as prayer groups. The large and relatively affluent Parish B provided the least evidence of

non-Catholic participation, whilst the similarly sized – but relatively deprived – Parish A, situated in an ethnically diverse area, exhibited the greatest degree of inclusiveness, with a high degree of participation with regards to the wider community in the parish's credit union, crèche facilities and 'Over 60's' club in particular.

12. Linking the empirical to the conceptual

It is also possible to interpret the trends highlighted above in a conceptual framework which suggests the significance of these findings to the work of Coleman (1988;1990) and others (Hall, 1997; Leadbeater, 1996; Parry et al, 1992; Peri 6, 1997; Putnam, 1993) . For instance, Parry et al (1992) have previously made a connection between the additional years spent in education and the propensity of an individual to become involved in community affairs, whether through voluntary work, membership of an association or a more overtly political route. In addition, Hall (1997) suggests that the increase in the numbers of those receiving a secondary and post-secondary education over the past three decades has been reflected by increasing levels of community based involvement in the UK:

> The average impact of post-secondary education has been to increase graduates' levels of community involvement since the 1950s, perhaps because more students from modest backgrounds now benefit from a level of civic engagement from which, without such an education, they would previously seen little returns and been disinclined to pursue. (Hall, 1998 p.35).

The picture that emerged from the Birmingham parishes would also appear to be reflected more generally in terms of the operation of certain types of social capital. Civic engagement of this nature is distinctly oriented towards certain sections of society (Hall, 1998). These tend to be its more affluent sections, those who fall into the professional and skilled categories, and who are more likely to develop a thickness of association and membership of the type related to the development of social capital. Moreover, levels of social trust exhibited by different socioeconomically defined groups in society tend to reflect this pattern, with the more 'professional' groups exhibiting a greater degree of trust with regards to the general populace (Hall, 1998).

However, what also emerged in the context of the interviews was the extent to which other factors were acting to subvert this picture. A central aspect of this is the possibility that the non-professional groups in the parishes were less inclined to participate because of the erroneous idea that they were in same way inferior to the dominant clique of relatively well qualified individuals, as suggested by one respondent,

> When you talk to people, they say that it puts them off, you know, they say 'Oh, you teachers...!', you know, it has an intimidating effect which I think is probably true to an extent, but I also think that maybe it's a bit of a cop-out because it's not as if they couldn't do it themselves if they put their minds to it. [Justice and Peace, Parish B]

Moreover, Hornsby-Smith (1991) also highlights the prevalence of certain sub-sets of parishioners who tend to monopolise parish-based activities. Yet it is also important to realise that this pattern may also owe much to a strategy of 'least resistance' on the part of clerics. Parish priests may look upon those from the more professional socioeconomic groupings as their social peers and thus more approachable. For their part, teachers may be more willing to participate due, not only to their experience, but also their 'connectivity' – evident in relations of mutual trust and respect– with both pupils and their parents living in the parish. As a result, parishioners who are perceived to not possess the same level of experience, or the social standing of teachers, and who, as a result, may initially be reticent in coming forward – despite the fact that they could probably fulfil a similar role equally as competently as someone with more 'qualifications' – may become marginallised in the parish.

More generally, some of the actions on the part of the clerics were similar to role adopted by what Leadbeater (1997) characterises as the 'social entrepreneur'. These are typified as individuals who utilise under used resources within a deprived neighbourhood for the benefit of community members. Among such resources is 'human capital', and, as the above suggests, some of the Birmingham clerics marshalled the use of this particular resource through the animation of certain constituents of their parishes. Moreover, this also reflects the value of exploiting, what Peri 6 (1997) terms 'weak ties', within social systems for the purpose of developing – or utilising existing – social capital.

In addition to this, it was also evident that certain parishes were more representative of 'closed communities' of the nature described by Coleman (1988), and its attendant benefits. This was most apparent in the larger parishes – B and D – which also tended to have associated secondary schools. This combination appears to have increased the density of associations between parish members, many respondents suggesting that they did feel part of a distinct community based around the church. Other forms of social capital which appeared to have significance to the creation of indicators of social capital within the parishes included ideology and obligations. Clerics, in particular, related their community development activities to Catholic Social Teaching – interpreted as a form of ideology – as the basis for their actions. The impact of obligations, in turn, was apparent amongst respondents who conveyed how they had felt compelled to perform a particular role, often because their children benefited in some way, but also because once asked by the parish priest they did not want to let him down. There was also a suggestion that Fox's notion of institutional influences upon social capital had some resonance upon the patterns apparent within the four parishes, although this was extremely cursory in nature. A number of clerics gave the impression that they were influenced by changes to norms and expectations regarding responses to social issues instigated through the Church hierarchy. It is also obvious that in a number of parishes the Church is already engaged in a process of tackling the symptoms of social exclusion, although these examples appear to remain in relative isolation, both in terms of other agencies and the broader Church structure itself.

13. Birmingham case study: summary

At the start of this chapter it was stated how the study described within formed part of a wider study. Accordingly, the main goals and issues of this study were reiterated. It was highlighted that through the process of 'theoretical sampling' four parishes, A to D, each with distinct characteristics, had been chosen within which to assess the main thesis questions. Accordingly, a profile of each parish was initially outlined. Following this, the responses from interviewees involved in church-based groups within each of the four parishes were discussed in detail.

Trends emerging through this process were then highlighted. These, in turn, were linked back to the theoretical work discussed in Chapters three, four and five.

Notions such as the 'closed community' and forms of social capital based around obligations, were seen as having some resonance with the picture that emerged in the Birmingham parishes. Although, to stress this would be to overemphasise it. Other aspects of the findings did mirror the work of Leadbeater on the 'social entrepreneur' however. Despite there being some evidence of the role played by CST in the motivation for activities, Fox's notion of the institutional construction of social capital seemed to bear little relation to the picture evident in the Birmingham parishes. The following Liverpool case study uses these themes as a basis – whilst also trying to expand the scope of the study to isolate factors which may be pertinent to other context – adopting the same procedure as used here to investigates the main thesis questions.

Chapter 7: The Liverpool Case Study

1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to document the picture that emerged from the in-depth and intensive analysis of four Catholic parishes in the diocese of Liverpool. Once again, this was designed to shed light upon the thesis questions which emerged through the conceptual discussion in the first part of this study, and which defined its main themes. Whilst these remain the same as they were in the previous chapter, Liverpool provides its own particular character and, as such, the opportunity to investigate the role of the parish in one of the most deprived areas of the UK. This is particularly relevant in the context of the Church's potential role in tackling social exclusion, as discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Following the procedure adopted for Birmingham, this initially involves the 'profiling' of four Catholic parishes. In turn, through this process four distinct context emerged:

A) For its part, Parish B is situated in an area of Liverpool which is among the more affluent of the city. With a population of 2,400 Catholics, this parish is around the average for the diocese as a whole. At the same time, indicators of social capital-related activities are limited given the size of the parish so that a key element of work in this parish will be to account for this disparity. Again, this provides an opportunity to investigate the influence of relative affluence upon the nature of the Church's activities. (Figure 15).

A) Parish C, in turn, is situated in an area characterised by social and economic deprivation. Its population of around 1,300 Catholics makes it amongst the smaller parishes in the diocese. However, it still displays quite a diversity of social capital-related indicators. Once again, the purpose of the study here will be to ascertain the reasons significant in maintaining this level of activity. (Figure 16).

A) Parish D displays levels of deprivation which are amongst the highest in Liverpool and as such is a particularly valuable context within which to assess the church's localised response to deprivation. Whilst the size of the parish is near the average for the diocese, the number of social capital-related indicators is small. Again, the study will seek to explain this disparity. (Figure 17).

A) Parish A represents a extremely deprived area of Liverpool - this characteristic was chosen with particular reference to the Church's localised response to exclusionary

trends. With a population of 4,000 Catholics, it also represents one of the largest parishes in the diocese. In turn, it possesses a large number of indicators of social capital-related activity and as such, represents a valuable opportunity to investigate how this level of activity was engendered. (Figure 18)

Next, the responses from the semi-structured interviews conducted within each parish are then discussed. Following from this, the major trends to emerge through these interviews are highlighted. These are then related back to the theoretical work of Coleman (1988;1990), and others (Fox, 1996; Fukuyama, 1995; Leonardi, 1995; Putnam, 1991, 1993), in order to gauge the salience of the studies findings to the wider conceptual debate concerning social capital. The following sections elaborate the characteristics of each parish in turn as well as the indicators of social capital related to each site.

2 Social and economic profile, Parish A

Parish A is situated just to the north of the city centre in an area of mixed council and privately-owned housing consisting mostly of semi-detached dwellings which lie adjacent to a major road alongside which the parish church and parochial house are situated. As Table 4 shows, the indicators of deprivation for this area vary in their relative severity in comparison with Liverpool when taken as a whole. For instance, whilst overcrowding is near the average for the city as a whole, unemployment is relatively high. The majority of residents belong to the manual and unskilled socio-economic categories (accounting for 56% of residents). Minor crimes such as car related thefts and house break-ins have been relatively stable over the last two years and remain near the average for the city as a whole. As Table 5 illustrates, non-Church indicators of social capital for the parish include a Methodist chapel and playing fields which are associated to the local comprehensive school. In addition to these, there is a local swimming pool, a post office as well as a large retail centre at the boundary of the parish. Meanwhile, the indicators of social capital related to the Catholic parish consist of a number of church-based groups (Table 6). As the table illustrates these can be divided between those groups which fulfil a largely spiritual or religious function and those which are more overtly social in function to the extent that their main remit can be interpreted as promoting gatherings of various subsets of parishioners/local residents.

Figure 15: Photographic Plate, Liverpool Parish A

Figure 16: Photographic Plate, Liverpool Parish B

Figure 17: Photographic Plate, Liverpool Parish C

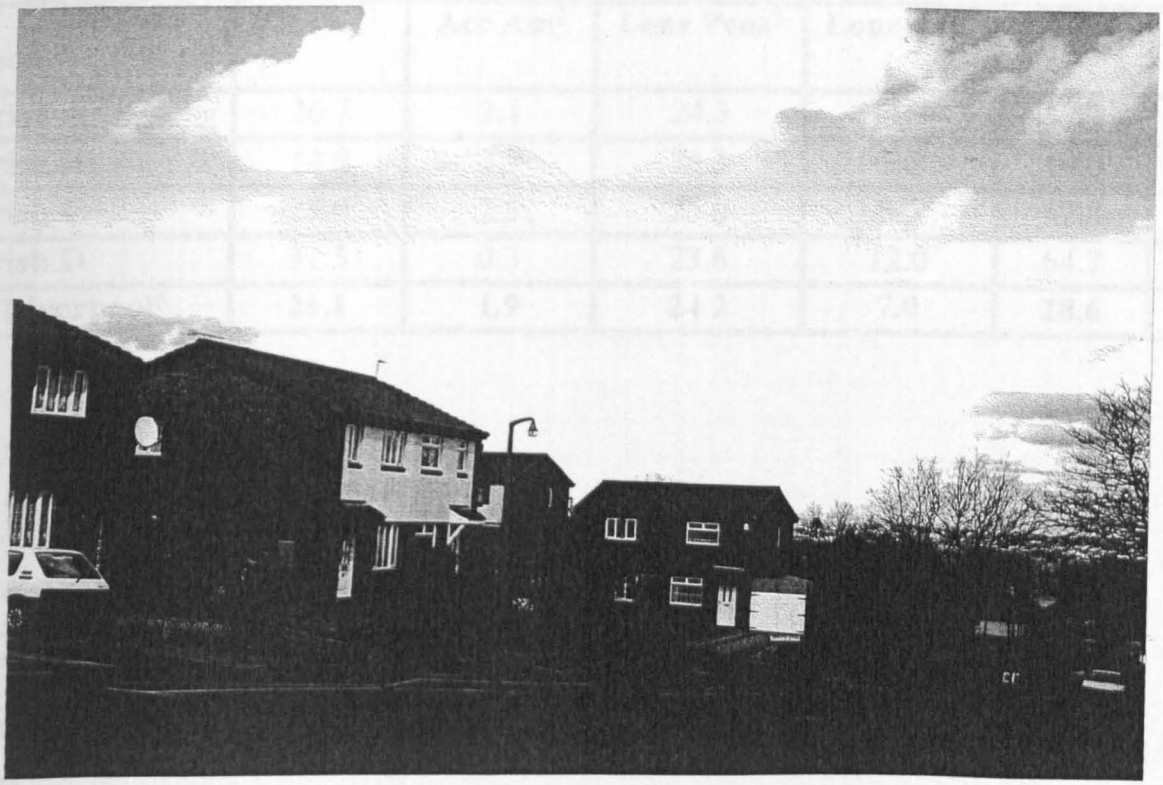


Figure 18: Photographic Plate, Liverpool Parish D

Table 4: Indicators of deprivation

Indicator / Ward	Un(%)[1]	Acc Am[2]	Lone Pens[3]	Lone Par[4]	Tenure[5]	Lone Par[6]
Parish A	26.7	2.1	24.3	11.4	57.3	2.46
Parish B	14.9	2.9	26.3	3.3	10.0	2.09
Parish C	29.6	2.5	25.0	8.5	62.8	2.74
Parish D	31.5	0.3	23.6	12.0	64.7	2.64
Av Liverpool[6]	**21.1**	**1.9**	**24.2**	**7.0**	**28.6**	**2.44**

Notes:

1.total unemployment rate, 1991 (%)
2. residents without exclusive use of amenities, 1991
3. households with 1 or more pensioners only, 1991
4. households with 1 adult only with child(ren) aged 0-15,1991
5. average household size, 1991
6. ward average for city of Liverpool

(Source: Census of population, 1991)

Table 5 Indicators of social capital, Liverpool Parishes

Indicator[1]	Parish A	Parish B	Parish C	Parish D
1. Religious facilities[2]	1/1	4/3	2/2	5/2
2. Health clinics	×	1	1	1
3. Housing offices	×	×	1	1
4. Post offices	1	1	1	1
5. Retail centres	1	1	1	1
6. Youth and Community Facilities	1	×	×	×
7. Primary schools	2	1	2	1
8. Secondary schools	1	1	1	1
9. Leisure facilities	1	3	×	4
10. Public houses	1	2	1	3
11. Early Year facilities	×	×	×	×
12. Health facilities	×	1	1	1
13. Swimming pools	1	×	×	×
Total	9	18	11	21

Notes.
1. numbers correspond to those in Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10 on the following pages
2. first number in cell indicates church or chapel whilst second indicates hall or community centre

Table 3. Church-affiliated groups, nature of, and individuals interviewed

Catholic Parish	Parish A	Parish B	Parish C	Parish D
Catholic population	6,500	3,500	1,250	2,430
	Confr*	APF	Ecu Cov*	SVP*
	Immac Con*	GSS*	UCM	MPG
	SVP*	PTA*	SVP*	Sen Cit Grp*
	LM	UCM*	MCR	
	LG	SVP*	MHU*	
	UCM*	Welfare	Youth Club*	
	YWA*		Sen Cit Grp*	
	Youth Grp*		CL Grp	
	Scouts		Parish Club*	
	Guides			
	Brownies			
	GSS*			
	Folk Choir			
	Prayer Group			
	Emmaus Grp			
	Environ Grp			
	Banner Grp			
	RCIA*			
	Rainbow Grp			
	JP Group*			
	PR Group			
	MAMI			
	YCW			
	IMPACT			
Total Interviews	8	4	6	3

Note: asterix indicates when an individual was interviewed, shaded cells indicate groups which perform a largely social or welfare function whilst unshaded indicate those with an overtly religious or ceremonial aspect

Abbreviations:

APF	Association for the propogation of the Faith
CL Grp	Childrens Liturgy group
Confr	Confraternity group
Ecu Cov	Ecumenical Covenant
GSS	Guild of St. Stephen's
Immac Con	Parish Social Apostolate
JP	Justice and Peace Group
IMPACT	Bereavement group
LM	Legion of Mary
MCR	Mount Carmel Rosary Association
MHU	Mentally Handicapped Unit
MPG	Marriage Preparation Group
SVP	St. Vincent de Paul Society
UCM	Union of Catholic Mothers

Figure 18. Indicators of social capital, Liverpool Parish A

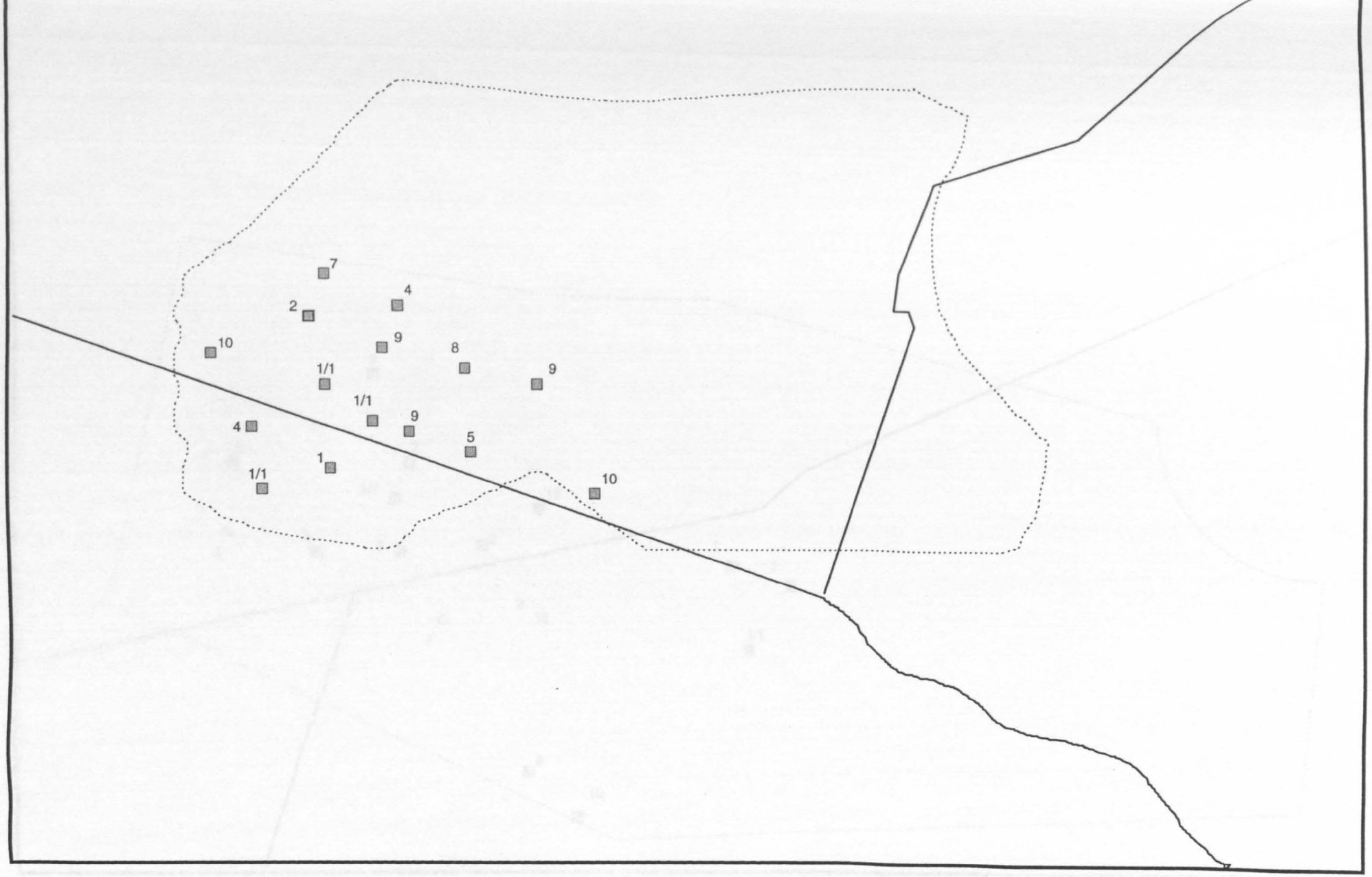


Figure 19. Indicators of social capital, Liverpool Parish B

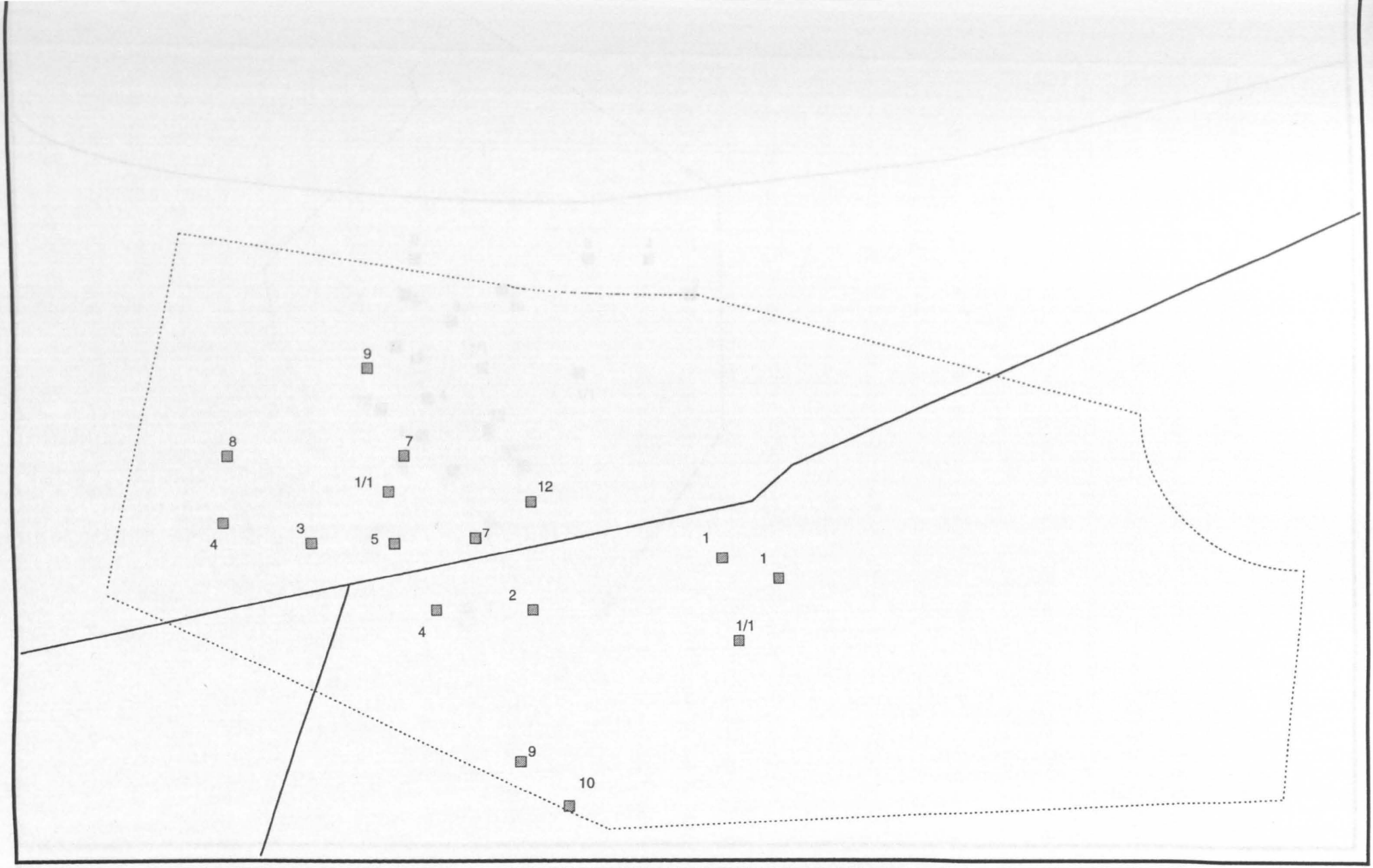


Figure 21. Indicators of social capital, Liverpool Parish C

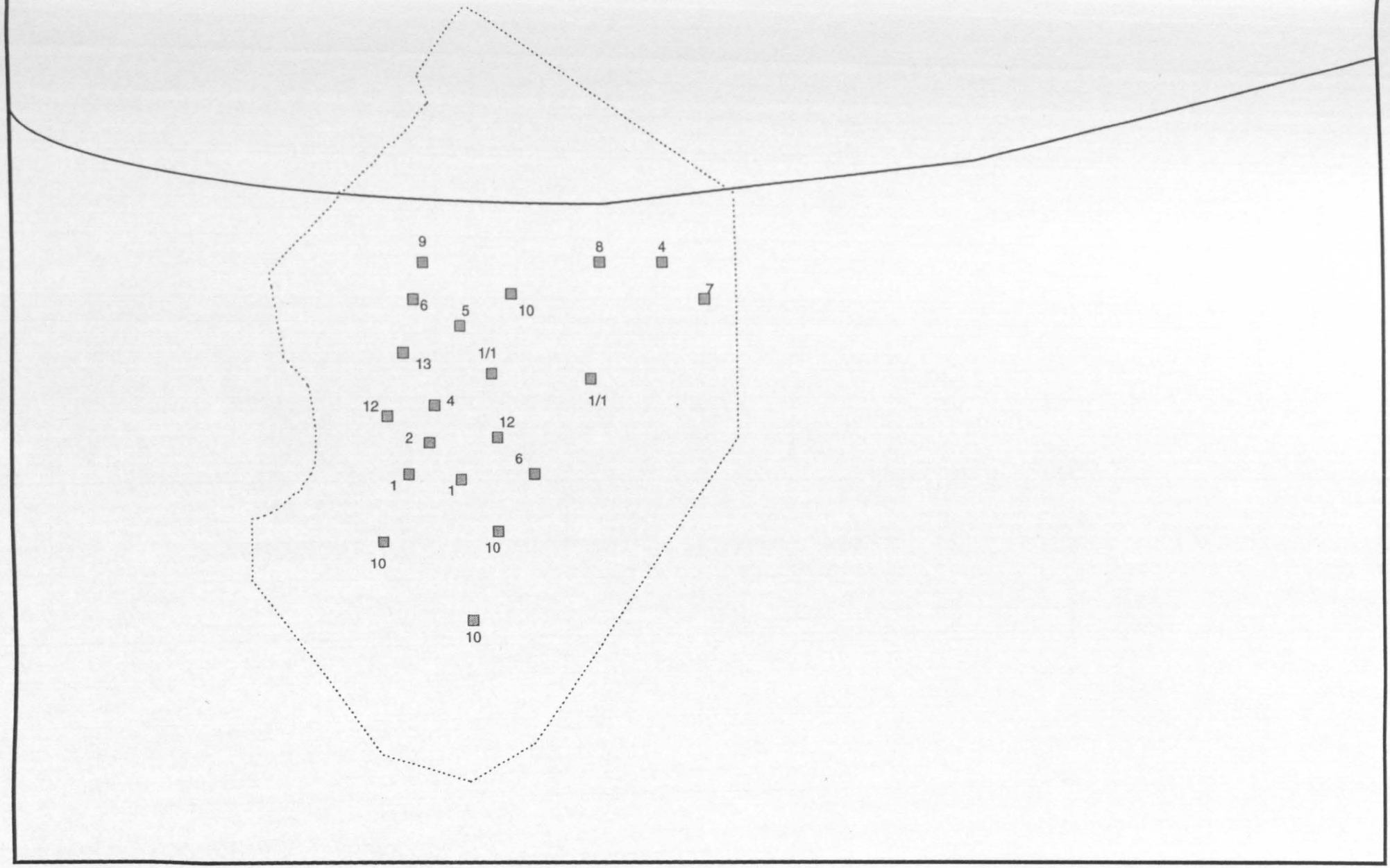


Figure 22. Indicators of social capital, Liverpool Parish D

3. Social and economic profile, Parish B

This parish is situated to the immediate south of the city centre. The area it inhabits consists mainly of large detached and semi-detached Georgian houses but also includes a number of council owned blocks of flats, directly opposite the church and parochial house, which were built in the 1960s and 1970s. As highlighted in Table 4, the indicators of deprivation are below the average for the city and are more characteristic of the more affluent parts of Liverpool such as Granby and Notty Ash. The area is in close proximity to both of the city's Universities and so has a high number of student tenants in houses which have been converted for this purpose. In turn, whilst 38% of residents belong to the professional and semi-professional socio-economic groupings, 26% are categorised as skilled and semi-skilled.

The levels of crime in the area are low relative to the average rate of incidences for Liverpool as a whole, with only seventeen house break-in's and seven car related thefts reported during the first half of 1997. In terms of indicators of social capital (Table 5), the Catholic parish also contains a number of other religious facilities associated with various denominations. Community facilities consist of a voluntary centre near the boundary of the parish as well as a health clinic. In terms of leisure facilities the parish is in close proximity to a number of playing fields associated to, in turn, a comprehensive school, a training college as well as a local rugby club. The parish also contains two public houses. As Table 6 indicates, there are five groups affiliated to the Catholic parish.

4. Social and economic profile, Parish C

Parish C is situated in the southern part of the city and is representative of this area as a whole in that it mostly comprises large estates of semi-detached two-storey council housing built in the 1970s. The indicators of deprivation used (Table 4) provide an overall picture of an area which is amongst the most deprived in the entire city. With the notable exception of access to basic amenities all other indicators are well above the respective averages for the city as a whole with overcrowding appearing to be a particular problem with on average 3.4 people per dwelling. This picture also appears to be part of a trend with a similar pattern throughout the

1980s. Unemployment in particular appears to have been long-term in nature and this is particularly evident in the high rate of youth unemployment in the area (23% in 1991.)

Additional indicators also suggest that the area suffers from a high degree of deprivation. Car ownership is well below average and crime has increasingly become a problem for the area over the last twenty years, with household break-ins and car theft both on the increase. As can be seen in Table 5, in addition to the Catholic church, the parish also contains one Pentecostal, one Congregational and three Anglican churches. The parish is also proximate to a health clinic and housing office whilst the area supports four local public houses. Leisure facilities consist of a number of designated sport and play area sites which include a playground, an adventure playground as well as a number of what are termed 'kickabout hard surface areas.' There is also a voluntary advice centre within the parish. Access to these facilities is unrestricted and most are council run and owned. As Table 6 shows, activities related to the Catholic church are composed of a marriage preparation group, a St Vincent de Paul group and a senior citizens group.

5. Social and economic profile, Parish D

Parish D lies to the north of the city centre and is characteristic of the surrounding area which is dominated by a number of council estates and tenement blocks built in the early 1970's as part of the council's relocation scheme away from the inner-city. The parish itself is centred in one such small estate of mostly semi-detached housing adjacent to a major road and adjoins a number of larger estates which fall partially within its boundary. In terms of relative deprivation the indicators for the area are all higher than the average for the city when taken as a whole, with unemployment appearing to be particularly acute (see Table 4). This problem appears to have been long-term in nature with a relatively static picture throughout the 1980s.

The socio-economic groupings which account for the majority of the population of the area fall into the semi-skilled (26%) and unskilled manual categories (24%). Crime is also increasingly a problem for the area with the last five years witnessing increases in both car related crime and house break-ins. The indicators of social capital in the parish (Table 5), consist of a Church of England chapel and associated church hall, whilst there is also a retail centre and swimming

pool near the boundary of the parish as well as two local pubs. As Table 6 shows the Catholic parish's indicators of social capital are comprised of a youth group, a social club, a St Vincent de Paul group, a handicapped group, and the activities of an ecumenical convenant with the local Anglican church.

6. Perceptions of respondents, Parish A

All the respondents were initially asked about their perceptions of their parish and what they saw as the main issues facing both the parishioners and the wider community. In response to this particular question the cleric at parish A initially pointed to what he saw as the high degree of disadvantage and range of difficulties that were experienced by the majority of residents not only of his parish but the wider area in general. In particular he highlighted the issue of unemployment. He also saw this problem as having multiplier effects in the form of the increasing levels of crime and vandalism and in the form of increased poverty and poor standard of housing for the parish's inhabitants. When questioned regarding his own role within the parish the cleric stated that he saw social awareness as a central aspect of his ministry. He brought attention to his own personal preference for, as he put it, 'working with the people'. When asked to expand upon this he explained that he saw the parish as a process of interaction between priest and parishioners within which problems could be addressed through mutual understanding and co-operation. Within this framework the cleric saw his role as a motivator or facilitator rather than as an administrator who was directly involved in the running of parish groups.

The latter role, he suggested, would be unrealistic anyway given the constraints placed upon his time by both his ceremonial and sacramental function. Another factor he highlighted here was the reduction in assistance from other clerics due to falling numbers of ordinations to the priesthood. Indeed his own parish was soon to lose a assistant priest and the cleric was of the opinion this would reduce the social involvement with the parish further. He also highlighted the work of his own religious Order[1] and its vocation to serve what he described as the

[1] Religious 'orders' are specific groups of clerics within the Church who affiliate themselves to the teachings of a particular individual – usually a saint – adopting a corresponding a way of life and interpretation of doctrine

'common good' by ministering to and working among the most poor and disadvantaged groups in society:

> the particular Order I belong to are very concerned about the Gospel values of liberation and being with the poor especially. Most of our parishes are in areas like this and we have a policy of going out to the people and trying to be with them in the problems that they're facing and not waiting for them to come to Mass. There was a great need here for that type of activity to go on here because it wasn't being done very successfully until we arrived. [Cleric, Parish A].

He highlighted that the order had been ministering in this particular parish for the last ten years and had sought to maintain a dual social and religious role. This approach was also reflected by an assistant priest in the same parish. He, in turn, described his decision to live for a year in a flat in a one of the council estates in the parish. His reason for doing this was that instead of the local residents having to come to the church for help, a process he felt many of them might find intimidating, he should instead go directly to them to better understand their needs by experiencing them for himself first-hand. He subsequently became involved in a variety of local organisations and directly involved in the formation of a housing federation which campaigned for improved conditions as well as a credit union for the local residents. His stated intention was to present himself as a resource for the community, using any influence he may have had over officials and other service providers by virtue of his status, for the benefit of the residents.

In addition to the clerics a large number of parishioners also participated in the running of the various groups and associations affiliated to the church in the parish (Table 6). The actual socioeconomic background of those parishioners who ran and maintained these groups appears to have reflected a more general sample of the community rather than being dominated by a particular sub-set based upon profession or any other factor. The parish priest's view was that:

> Some of them would not be in any way be professionals but they would have a great sense of grievance, you know, the Liverpool people do have a sense that they are often overlooked by government and councils and therefore we have to do something ourselves and I think that goes into their history, the old dockers and people like that, the mentality they have. [Cleric, Parish A]

The view of the parish priest generally concurred with the picture provided by those parishioners when they were interviewed. There was little evidence to suggest that any one group or set of parishioners with a particular social or professional background dominated the parish activities. However, an important distinction emerged during the interviews with regard to groups which fulfilled a largely religious or ceremonial role and those which were primarily concerned with issues of welfare and social aspects of the parish. It is also important to note that in some cases it was more difficult to make a clear distinction although it was generally possible to say that in certain cases the function of a particular group was more related to an overtly religious function than a social one. An example of this would be the prayer groups that exist in many of the Liverpool parishes. By their very nature these groups will involve some degree of social interaction, if only among their participants. However their primary function could be termed religious or even spiritual in nature.

This factor had two main impacts, the first of which concerned the respondents' motivations for becoming involved in their particular activity. Whilst the reasons for participation cited by those interviewed who were involved in a predominantly social group or club encompassed encouragement from the parish priest and introduction by a friend, the more religious or spiritually oriented groups usually had different motivations. Interviewees from these groups tended to highlight a particular belief and adherence to Christian ethics as a dominant reason for their involvement and this reflected a wider disparity that existed between these groups and those which were more welfare oriented, this time over the issue of inclusion. In relation to this issue a number of significant factors emerged during the course of the interviews.

Firstly, those who were involved in the overtly religious groups, such as the prayer, Emmaus and marriage preparation groups, highlighted the fact that by their very nature these tended to be exclusive to Catholics. Although it was also often highlighted that the purpose of these transcended Catholicism and that they were aimed at a general good for all and that those seeking to become Catholic would be welcomed to participate. Despite this, those groups which were overtly religious and more importantly pursued an overtly Catholic interpretation of religion were on the whole dominated by Catholics. It was also usually accepted that this

would prove a barrier, if only tacit in nature, to the participation of non-Catholics. One respondent qualified this point by suggesting that it was 'a Catholic group after all' and that other churches had 'their own' groups for 'their own' parishioners.

Another element regarding inclusion relates to those groups which performed a chiefly social or welfare role. These would initially appear to provide a greater opportunity for the inclusion of non-Catholics due to their less overtly religious function. Two points in particular emerged from the interviews of individuals who maintained such groups. The first of these was the general consensus that non-Catholics were in theory welcome to participate in or benefit from these groups without exclusion. The second concerned the actual picture of participation from non-Catholic residents of the parish and community in general and was more complex. The picture varied to a great extent with examples such as the parish credit union which had developed to become a resource for the whole community with the Church's role evolving into one of partnerships with other groups in the community. In general other groups such as the scouts, brownies and clubs for the youth and elderly comprised a proportion of non-Catholic residents although respondents suggested that the ratio of participants was generally towards a two-thirds majority in favour of the Catholic population.

In a more general sense, the respondents suggested that the level of interaction with other agencies or voluntary groups was relatively limited. The most frequent reason suggested being that little scope existed because there were no other groups active in the community and they were not aware of any opportunities for joint activities. The local council was also viewed in a relatively negative light by a number of respondents with regards to it's lack of direct involvement in the problems of the community. In relation to interaction with other churches the parish priest expressed the opinion that although he would like there to be 'more of an ecumenical trust' he didn't really have any contact with other ministers in the area and he didn't see it as a huge priority anyway. His opinion was that, 'that kind of stuff seems to take place more in middle class areas'.

7. Perceptions of respondents, Parish B

The priest at site B characterised his parish as containing areas of both relative affluence as well as pockets of what he termed the 'less well off', although he still felt that it was one of the better off areas in economic terms in the city as a whole. When questioned in relation to what he perceived to be the role of the Church within the parish both generally and with particular regard to his own activities his response was that social and welfare issues were more the concern of bodies such as the local and city councils. However, he also expressed the opinion that he would still like to be more active in a social sense with his parishioners but was prevented from fulfilling such a role due to time constraints. In explaining this he highlighted that in addition to his ceremonial role which took up the majority of his time, his parish had recently gained charitable status to increase its funding base. Yet this also had the more undesirable effect of increasing the amount of paper work he was required to complete. As a result of this he was no longer able to find the time to visit his parishioners in their homes on a regular basis to discuss any problems they might have or 'simply have an informal chat about their views on a particular issue of local significance' as he once had.

When questioned about his own efforts to develop parish activities he highlighted the difficulty of finding people who were able to spare the time required. He also pointed out that of the four parish groups that were currently active he had been instrumental in starting just one, the Guild of St. Stephen's - a club which organised social events for the church alter servers - the others having been in place prior to his arrival eight years earlier. He also made the point that he also had to play a role in encouraging new members to join the existing groups through requests from the pulpit and also notices in the parish hall and church. A UCM organiser from the parish who was also interviewed stated that the main factor in her decision to become involved had been a friend who had introduced her to the group. In turn, she also saw the weekly UCM meetings as an informal opportunity to meet and talk to friends outside of the home or pub whilst also doing some good through charitable work and fund-raising for the parish and other causes. A member of the PTA for the local Secondary school in the parish also described how he had been asked by the parish priest if he would be one of the representatives of the parents

on the association as he had a number of children attending. He also thought another reason he had been asked was that he had known the cleric for some time and he had been involved in aspects of the church in the past. It was also suggested that the infrequency of the meetings meant that he was more willing to become involved although he felt more obliged because the welfare of his children and those of his friends was at stake.

As in the case of the previous parish, the groups in parish B which were more overtly ceremonial or spiritual in nature tended to be exclusively comprised and for the benefit of the Catholic population of the area. The Guild of St. Stephen was one such group. However, as the parish priest highlighted, given the fact that the intention of the group was to provide a range of activities for the alter servers in the parish is was not surprising that this was the section of the community which participated and benefited. Furthermore he suggested that a host of other groups existed within the parish which people from all age groups were welcomed. Again, rather than saying that non-Catholics were actively excluded from such groups most respondents felt that it was more likely the case that they were unlikely to become involved because they were either affiliated to another local church which had its own such groups or they simply were not interested in overtly religious activities.

The respondents who ran groups affiliated to the parish such as the St.Vincent de Paul which had a more obvious welfare or social function all suggested that those who participated included a proportion of non-Catholics. In the case of the SVP the respondent even suggested that as many non-Catholics as Catholics were likely to benefit from the activities of the group. In turn, it was apparent from the interviews with respondents in Parish B that there was little or no concerted interaction with other voluntary of church bodies in the area. Most respondents saw little scope for such activity with a number complaining that when they had tried to get grant aid in relation to their groups from the local council they had been unsuccessful.

8. Perceptions of respondents, Parish C

The clerics view concerning the socieconomic situation within his parish was that it suffered from a number of problems. Among these were a high unemployment rate, escalating rates of petty crime and an increasingly apparent drug problem. His view concerning the role of the

Church in relation to such issues was framed in the terminology of Catholic Social Teaching. In particular he referred to the importance of 'community' and the 'common good' and expressed a personal commitment to participating in the lives of his parishioners and their everyday problems, a role which he viewed as central to his ministry. In expanding upon the motivating factors behind this approach he explained that he had been born and brought up in a similar area of Liverpool not too far away and that he knew 'these people' and how they thought. In regard to wider Church intervention or influence within his parish the cleric suggested that whilst there was a tacit expectation and implicit encouragement from within the Diocese and its officials and clerics, this influence was mostly evident in the literature that was sometimes circulated on social matters by bodies such as the Bishops Conference.

For his part, the cleric outlined his attempts to create a social and welfare function through a group for the local handicapped residents as well as a prayer group for parishioners both of which he had attempted to nurture since arriving in the parish. He also highlighted his efforts to become a trained counsellor with the intention of using these skills within the parish for the benefit of his parishioners. Among the factors which this respondent saw as limiting his capacity to develop a more social ministry included manpower. More specifically he stated that he was limited by time constraints due to his religious duties and he had found difficulty in delegating roles to his parishioners who often showed an unwillingness to become involved. Whilst recognising the constraints upon the time of others he found disconcerting the difficulty he experienced in getting more people involved. When probed on this point he suggested that factors such as the ageing Catholic population, allied with a falling attendance at church in recent years, as well as the discouraging impact of crime, as probable reasons.

The parishioners interviewed all highlighted the influence the cleric had had upon their decision to become involved in their respective groups. However in some cases their appeared to be more independent influences at work – two respondents in particular, one who had initiated a youth club the other who was involved in the SVP and Christian Workers Movement, both of whom suggested more fundamental beliefs and concerns, as typified here :

It makes me despair a bit because you see all the young ones around here who are getting in trouble by messing around and stuff but if they had something to go to, to relate to somebody there, I'm not been ideological here, just something for them to be involved in rather than hating everyone. So when I first started the youth group I did it purely for that reason. I thought there was no point in me saying there's nothing going on here because I was old enough to do it myself and that's why I started it. [Youth Group Worker, Parish C].

There was also a clear distinction between the inclusiveness of non-Catholics in these groups between those which had a more overtly religious function and those which had a more social aspect. The latter tended to include a significant minority of non-Catholics who, the respondents suggested, tended to be introduced to the clubs and groups by their Catholic friends. In turn, the only outward expression of interaction with other bodies in the local area was in the form of an ecumenical trust with the local Anglican church. The parish priest outlined how this involved a sharing of resources and participation in joint activities. The initial impetus was seen as being the need to maximise the use of limited resources such as church halls and manpower.

9. Perceptions of respondents, Parish D

When asked to characterise the area in a social and economic sense the parish priest pointed to a high level of unemployment as well as problems of crime and vandalism within his parish. In turn, he interpreted his own role within the parish as being 'concerned more with the spiritual and sacramental needs of my parishioners rather than their social needs'. He also saw the existing welfare system as providing for most of the needs of his parishioners and saw the intervention by the Church in social matters as something to be avoided:

I'm not a firm believer. I don't believe in taking a lead on social matters. I believe that should come from others. There was a meeting recently where the local Anglican vicar was calling for more action to combat the problems in the local area but to be honest people around here are happy to live on social security benefits. [Cleric, Parish D].

When questioned regarding his own attempts to develop parish activities the cleric responded that the main problem he had encountered was difficulty in getting parishioners to make a commitment to such activities. It was his perception that they only became inclined to

participate when an issue of education of welfare directly concerning their children at the local school was involved. When asked if he knew why this was the case he replied that he sensed a degree of apathy among his parishioners as well as a certain hostility to outside institutions whether in the form of the local council or the Church. This had been borne out of a sense that they had continuously been overlooked and ignored. A consequence of this was that people tended to be less 'trusting' which effected the 'sense of community' in the area:

> In my first parish there was a sense of community, its beginning to grow [here], its beginning to grow, but it's nothing like it was in the old days. The old days in the parish I was in, my first parish, everyone knew each other, everyone was concerned with each other. There are patches in this parish where they are very good with each other, somebody's sick, they'll look after their kids or if someone's got a hospital appointment they'll give them a lift, and so on. It's beginning to grow in this area but I think there's a long way to go before they can really trust everybody. [Cleric, Parish D].

Neither of the other two respondents in the parish (Table 6) highlighted the cleric as a motivating or influential factor in their decision to become involved in the respective groups. One respondent, a St Vincent de Paul organiser, saw the group as an opportunity to use the increased free time he had since retirement. Although none of the respondents gave the impression that there was any concerted interaction with other agencies or voluntary groups the parish priest did highlight that he was involved in one group in particular which combined a variety of actors, institutional and otherwise, from the local community. This had initially taken the form of a charitable trust but had subsequently developed into a business initiative centre for the local residents who also made up a proportion of the board which ran the group. The rest of the board was made up of local councillors and members of local churches and businesses.

10. Main trends

Opinions differed markedly between the clerics interviewed concerning their role within their respective parishes. Two general approaches were evident. Clerics from the more active parishes, A and C, saw the development of a participative culture among their parishioners as an integral part of their ministry. This was reflected in their considerable efforts, and apparent

success, in developing a diverse range of activities and groups within their respective parishes. It was also apparent that the larger of the two parishes, benefited from a large Catholic population from which to draw activists as well as a number of assistant clerics. As the smallest, although second most active, of the four, Parish C relied upon a different strategy. More emphasis was placed here upon the concerted efforts of a limited number of committed individuals.

A different approach was evident in parishes B and D. Here, there was a tendency for the clerics to make a distinction between the spiritual and social aspects of their ministry. Both made it clear that the former took priority in their parishes. There was more of a sense that whilst the social aspects of the parish were important, they were not viewed as the most important consideration. With issue in mind, limitations upon available free time was the most common reason given by the parish priests when asked what the main limiting factor was upon their development of parish based groups. This was usually related to their commitment to perform church services and related ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and christenings. The size of the parish was also influential, the larger Parish A possessed an assistant cleric who performed some of the functions of the parish.

Another trend to emerge from the interviews was a general lack of cooperation between church-based groups and other locally based organisations, whether in terms of other local churches, council run facilities or voluntary bodies. Although, there were some notable exceptions to this rule. An ecumenical trust which had been developed between parish C and a local Anglican church being one such example. As a result of this, both shared access to church buildings and respective sets of parishioners participated in each others activities and groups[2]. A local agency attempting to improve employment opportunities for local residents represented the context for cooperation between the local church and the wider community in parish D. Among the local representatives on its advisory board was the local priest, who worked

[2] As summed up by one respondent, "Most of them come from [names of local Catholic schools], but there's quite a few now coming from the Protestant school over the road, they also come from [names Anglican parish] just up the road. They're not all Catholic children who come. What we're hoping to do is to build a room so that we can have a bigger group, but the Vicar's just offered to let us use their parish hall from September" [Youth Group Worker, Parish C].

alongside councillors, the local MP , local businesses and residents from the surrounding neighbourhood to develop strategies into employment. Meanwhile, respondents in the large and relatively active parish A accounted for their general lack of cooperation with other groups in two ways. Firstly, that they had little faith in the local council to help them and so avoided involving them in parish activities. Secondly, that there were no other bodies in the local area undertaking work similar to them, so the opportunity simply did not arise for cooperation.

In turn, in terms of the inclusiveness of parish-based groups and clubs, the picture presented by respondents was one in which participation of non-Catholics in their groups was generally welcomed. Yet the extent to which this was apparent in practice varied. Whilst parish C included children from the local Anglican parish in its youth group, the respondents at the larger and more active parish A, reported that the dominance of Catholics in the general population meant that few non-Catholics tended to participate. The nature of a particular group also played a part in this whether or nor they were religiously oriented or more towards social and welfare functions.

11. Linking the empirical and the conceptual

By returning to Coleman's (1988;1990) classification of social capital, the salience of the findings from the four Liverpool parishes in a more conceptual sense can be gauged. Within the parishes, there was some evidence of the relevance of various forms of social capital. Ideology, was among these. Clerics, especially those interviewed in parishes A, B and C, equated their willingness to develop a more socially oriented ministry with the notion of 'Christian duty'. Reference was also often made by the cleric's to the doctrine of Catholic Social Teaching, and its commitment to the disadvantaged in society. Although such a feature was less apparent in the parishioners interviewed, there was evidence, particularly from two respondents in parish C, of a 'public goods' effect upon the rates of social activity within the parish. What this refers to is the apparent willingness of these individuals to act unselfishly and without personal gain for the benefit of the wider community. Another form of social capital, that based around obligations, was evident from a number of the respondents. Such individuals

felt obliged to fulfil a particular role in the running of a particular group or club largely because they doubted whether or not anyone would take their place.

In turn, Coleman's conception of the 'closed community', a community defined around a specific institution, was reflected to varying degrees in the responses from the four parishes. In Parish A, the largest and most indicative of social capital-related activity, respondents were more likely to feel part of a distinct community centred around the church. Whilst those in parish C, the smallest of the four, tended to equate community with the wider neighbourhood beyond the church. Respondents from the two intermediate sized parishes, one relatively affluent the other deprived, generally viewed the notion of a church-related community with less relevance.

Leadbeater's (1996) conception of the 'social entrepreneur', an individual who utilises social capital for the good of the community, also had resonance in the findings for the four parishes. Social entrepreneurs are seen as individuals who are particularly adept at addressing the needs of communities though their ability to utilise a previously under-used capacity or resources within the community itself.[3] In the context of the Liverpool interviews a number of individuals could be seen as complying with certain aspects or the characteristic behaviour of the 'social entrepreneur' as outlined here. In this sense the priest from Parish A conformed most rigidly, displaying both a heightened sense of social need and a commitment to and, more specifically, a willingness to act in a proactive and ameliorative capacity for the benefit of those within his parish. Of particular significance was his evocation of notions such as empowerment, facilitation and interaction as well as reference to his role as, what he termed, an 'oral animator':

> We get a group of people together and say, "now, what do you think we can do about this". We have an informal group and a number of groups have been formed that way, although they also meet with our [Priests] on a one to one basis, we get called in,

[3] Leadbeater (1997) has studied the activities of a number of such individuals. Among these is the example of a Minister at a United Reform Church in Bromley-by-Bow – one of the most deprived districts in the UK – who placed his church's resources and facilities at the disposal of the local community in an attempt to address the areas severe problems.

although it may not be a religious problem but a problem with debt or drugs within the family. [Cleric, Parish A]

Although, as already highlighted, such an emphasis in an order specifically given to work with the disadvantaged is unsurprising, what is of particular note is the acuity and awareness as to the dynamics of the social entrepreneur's role displayed by this particular priest. This approach was mirrored to a significant degree in the views of the cleric in Parish C. Again, an awareness and commitment to the needs of his parishioners was evident. A significant aspect here was his reference to being from the area himself. This commitment was particularly evidenced by his role as qualified counsellor within the parish, his initiation of a club for the handicapped in the area and his aiding and encouragement of others

In contrast, the cleric at Parish D exhibited few characteristics of this nature, as already seen, suggesting that social problems were not his concern. A degree of antipathy was evident in the priest's perception of his parishioners' unwillingness to help themselves, in what has already been seen to be an area with severe indicators of disadvantage, in tandem with what he perceived to be their willingness to subsist on welfare payments. In turn, Parish B's cleric articulated a similar reticence, although not as vigorously, in this respect. Despite this though, the cleric in Parish B did display a greater willingness to initiate and involve himself in the social life of the parish, though still not to the extent of parishes A and C.

Other than the respective clerics there was little evidence of concerted activity of this nature among the parishioners in general. However, there were two notable exceptions, both of which came from Parish C, which justify a more detailed examination and suggest that such individuals can have a highly significant impact upon the development of a social capital capacity within a parish. The first of these was an individual who had lived within the particular parish all her life and exhibited a high degree of commitment to the needs of her fellow parishioners, becoming involved in a number of capacities, including setting up a youth group. The second example concerns a retired individual who has been involved in a number of capacities within his parish and within the diocese as a whole for a considerable amount of time. As well as helping to run the St. Vincent de Paul society within the parish he was also

involved in the Justice and Peace movement within the diocese – his parish not possessing a group of its own – as well as being active within the Christian Workers Movement:

> There's a very sensitive report given about people who are sick or ill, that the various members make, that is recorded, but the information remains within, the information is retained by us and the essential element of that work is that people feel that they can trust us without the possibility of their private matters being made public. [SVP, Parish C]

A particularly illustrative case of his activities concerns his successful attempts to find employment for a number of individuals within the parish. Both of these individuals conform to a large extent with Leadbeater's interpretation in that both identified a need, utilised their social connections within the parish to meet this need and exhibited a strong commitment to their activities based upon associational bonds. The relevance of these two individuals to the social capital function of the parish as a whole shouldn't be underestimated, since the parish does exhibit a disproportionate amount of activity given its relatively small size. The degree to which the presence of such individuals within a parish is a chance occurrence or the extent to which their activities are muted by an unfavourable cleric – it's worth noting that the cleric in parish C was seen as helpful to their activities by both these individuals – or indeed other factors such as time constraints, access to resources, and so on, is open to further analysis.

As the previous section highlighted, crime also emerged as a trend in defining a 'sense of community' within some of the parishes. Respondents, particularly those in parishes C and D, often related their own experiences of having been burgled or having property damaged. Such activity was seen as reducing the level of trust amongst local residents, there willingness to act for others. Often, a simple issue, such as feeling safe on the journey to and from a group meeting at the church hall, particularly during the winter months, was highlighted. Hall (1998) and others (Peri 6, 1998) have noted the relation between crime and the erosion of trust as well as a more general break-down of sociability within effected communities:

> Crime matters not only because it damages people's well-being and erodes trust but also because in areas of high crime the incentives for young people, particularly men, to enter the mainstream labour market will be lower . (Peri 6, 1998 p.8).

The cleric at site C cited the recent example of the theft of tins of paint, intended for use in the parish hall, from outside his presbytery. Some time later he was informed by one of his parishioners that the paint had been offered to him for purchase in the local pub. The same priest also highlighted the activities of drug dealers within his parish. In another case the members of a Church run club for the physically disabled in the parish had been subject to physical and verbal abuse on leaving the parish hall. The impact of such incidence was apparent in the effect it had undermine trust and engender a sense of apathy but also how it can serve to undermine the efforts, or more importantly the motivation and willingness, of clerics and or other potential social entrepreneurs to act in a proactive sense socially. A number of clerics suggested that they had felt disenchanted because of incidences and discouraged from acting proactively in the future.

Another area where the findings from the four parishes reflected the wider theoretical considerations was in terms of the possible significance of more innate competing forms and structures of social capital acting to mute and subordinate the Church's own function in this respect. Portes and Landolt (1996) suggest that social capital from one source can serve to undermine that from another. In certain parishes such an effect appeared to manifest itself as a 'defensive' strategy on the part of communities who suffered a large degree of disadvantage . Some responses suggested that these alternative forms of social capital may originate in the cultural and historical based community structures which were uprooted by the council in the relocation schemes of 1970s and transported wholesale to their current locations, in the process engendering a distrust of the council and a tendency to reject 'outside' intervention from other institutions. This may have served to produce culturally and historically defined social linkages not explicitly dependent upon religion or geography. In turn, these structures and relations act as a natural break upon the extent to which the Church, or any institution, can impose its own influence particularly in relation to getting large numbers within a community mobilised. Although, this appeared to be more apparent in some parishes than others, the more deprived tending to display a greater degree of reticence.

12. Summary

At the start of this chapter, four distinct parishes, A to D, within the diocese of Liverpool were defined. These profiles provided the framework for the discussion which followed of the responses from those interviewed within each parish. Following from this, the main trends to emerge through this process were elaborated. Next, these trends were related back to the conceptual and theoretical work of Robert Coleman and others. From this, a number of conclusions can be made, and are outlined here:

i. Approaches by clerics to the development of social capital-related indicators fell into two distinct categories. Whilst the clerics in parishes A and C placed equal emphasis upon the development of a social and spiritual ministry in their responses, those in parishes B and D saw their spiritual and sacramental duties as more of a priority.

ii. Accordingly, there was more evidence of clerics having added to the stock of social capital-related indicators in parishes A and C than in B and D. Neither the size of a parish or its socioeconomic profile appeared to play a part in the tendency of a cleric to have a more socially-oriented ministry.

iii. Whilst the majority of respondents in the more active parishes of A and C highlighted their parish priest as a key motivating factor in their decision to become involved in a parish group, respondents in the relatively less active parishes B and D were more likely to point to the influence of a friend.

iv. All clerics agreed that the major barrier to the development of a social ministry was the drain their ceremonial function had upon their available time. Although the largest parish benefited from having two assistant clerics to share in such duties.

v. A distinct lack of cooperation was evident between parish-based and other similar groups within the parishes. An exception being parish C, in which an ecumenical covenant had been developed with the local Anglican parish out of necessity, in order to gain access to resources not available within the Catholic parish.

vi. Whilst respondents suggested that non-Catholics were welcome to take part in their groups, in reality evidence of such participation was limited. Again, the exception being parish C, in which members of the local Anglican parish participated in a number of the groups related to the Catholic parish.

These trends, in turn, were linked back to the theoretical work discussed in Chapters three, four and five. Notions such as 'public goods' and the 'social entrepreneur' were seen as having some resonance with the empirical evidence from the Liverpool parishes. Obligations, as well

as trust and ideology were forms of social capital which were seen to play a part in the creation and maintenance of social capital-related indicators. However, despite there being some evidence for the role of CST in the motivation of activities, Fox's (1996) notion of the institutional construction of social capital seemed to bear little relation to the picture evident within the parishes. In terms of the Church's localised response to social exclusion, evidence from the four parishes suggested that whilst no coherent strategy was in place, some parishes were obviously better at dealing with the multifaceted nature of the problem than others. Parish A, for instance, had developed a housing federation to campaign for improved housing conditions and a credit union for those with no access to orthodox sources of credit so that they were less likely to rely upon illegal sources.

Both the Liverpool and earlier Birmingham studies represent a distinct context in which to investigate the development of a church-related social capital capacity. One in which the Church represents only one of a multitude of actors engaged in civil society in the UK, and one in which it has only recently sought to develop a more socially oriented strategy. Accordingly, this offers just one, distinct, perspective on the main issues this thesis seeks to clarify. To gain a more diverse picture it is necessary to examine the role of the Church in a different context, one in which the Church is a dominant actor in arena of civil society. This is the task of the next chapter which examines the nature of Church activity in two parishes in Dublin, Ireland, asking the questions, 'how does the role of the parish differ between the two contexts', and, 'how does this frame the operation of social capital'?

Chapter Eight: The Dublin Case Study

1. Introduction

As in the previous two chapters, the task here is to investigate the main thesis questions in the context of a particular Catholic diocese. However, unlike the cases of Birmingham and Liverpool, the diocese of Dublin forms part of the Church in Ireland. As suggested in Chapter Five, the purpose of choosing this diocese is twofold. Firstly, it provides the opportunity to assess the impact upon the nature and pattern of church-based activities in a context where, unlike the UK, the Catholic Church enjoys relative hegemony and an unparalleled position as the state religion. Secondly, this could also provide valuable lessons for the Church in the UK and suggest possible limitations to a civil society-based role. This chapter is divided into two sections. Following the procedure used in the previous case studies, the first of these profiles the two parishes selected, using a combination of pictorial, census and survey-based material. Through this process, two distinct context emerge:

A) Parish A is seen as a inner-city area suffering from a range of social problems including high unemployment, poor housing and a severe drug problem. It also contains a range of parish-based indicators of social capital which are supplemented by a number of other local authority-based indicators (Figure 23).

B) Parish B, is situated in a suburb of Dublin to the south of the city and contains none of the social problems evident in its counterpart. In turn, the majority of social capital-based indicators are seen as related to the church. (Figure 24).

Next, the results of the analysis of the interviews with respondents are elaborated. In turn, the main features of this material are related back to the theoretical concerns which underpin the thesis. The final section summarises the main aspects to emerge though the Dublin study and

Figure 23. Photographic plate, Dublin Parish A

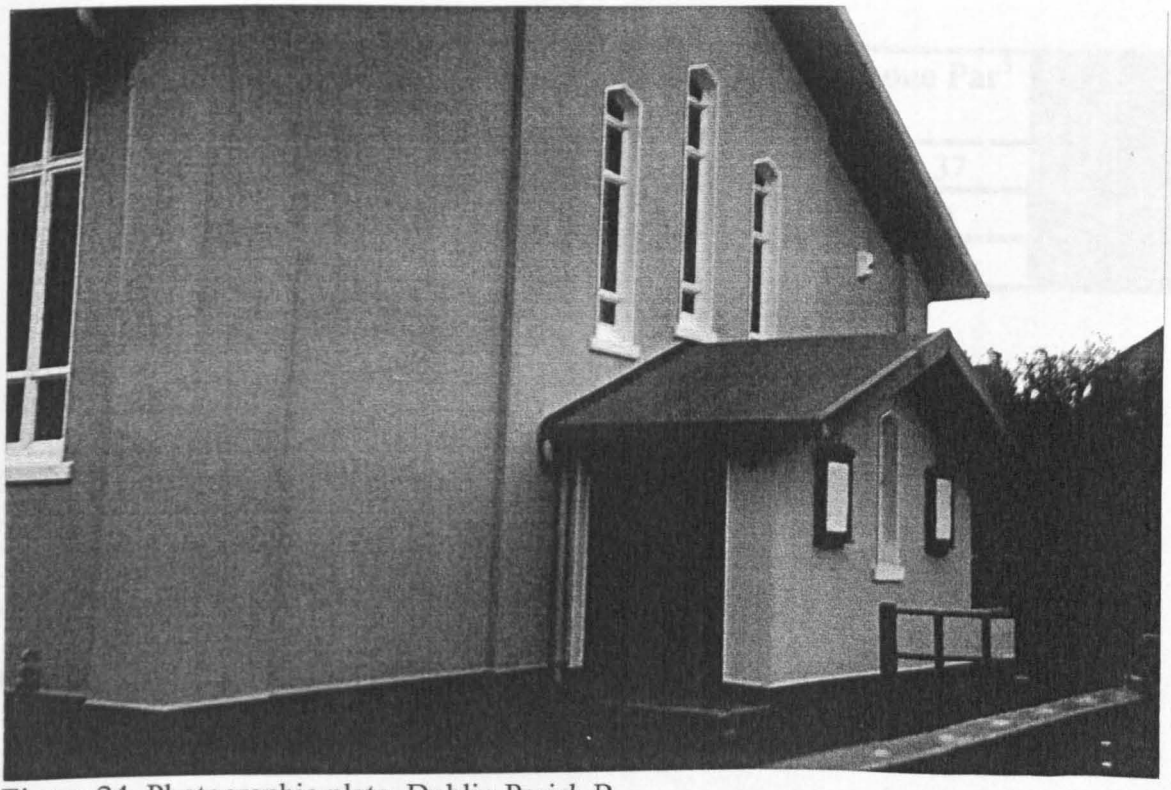


Figure 24. Photographic plate, Dublin Parish B

Table 24: Indicators of deprivation

Indicator / DED[1]	Un(%)[2]	Acc Am[3]	Lone Pens[4]	Lone Par[5]	
Parish A	6.0	3.31	8.7	3.37	
Parish B	8.2	2.28	8.6	1.4	
Av Liverpool[6]	**5.9**	**2.9**	**7.8**	**2.56**	

Notes:

1. 'district electoral division'
2. total unemployment rate (%), 1996
3. average number of persons per household
4. father or mother plus child(ren), 1996
5. persons living alone aged 65+, 1996
6. ward average for city of Dublin

(Source: Irish Census of population, 1996)

Table 8 Indicators of social capital, Liverpool Parishes

Indicator[1]	Parish A	Parish B		
1. Religious facilities[2]	1/1	2/1		
2. Health clinics	1	×		
3. Housing offices	1	×		
4. Post offices	2	1		
5. Retail centres	1	1		
6. Youth and Community Facilities	1	1		
7. Primary schools	1	1		
8. Secondary schools	1	1		
9. Leisure facilities	×	×		
10. Public houses	4	3		
11. Early Year facilities	1	×		
12. Health facilities	×	×		
13. Swimming pools	×	×		
Total	15	11		

Notes.
1. numbers correspond to those in Figures 17 and 18 on the following pages
2. first number in cell indicates church or chapel whilst second indicates hall or community centre

Table 9. Church-affiliated groups, nature of, and individuals interviewed

Catholic Parish	Parish A	Parish B		
Catholic population	9,500	7,500		
	C&A Soc	JBs Club		
	Liturg Com	M&T		
	Bridge Club	Soc Work*		
	Womn's For*	Easi-Slim		
	Choir	C.I.C*		
	SVP	Child Club*		
	Bethany Grp	Ladies Grp		
	Wm's Deb Grp	AA		
	Visit Grp*	GROW*		
	Sum Pro Team	LA&C*		
	Folk Grp	LA Clb*		
	Scouts*	Bridge Clb		
	Guides	SVP*		
	Pioneers*	UCM		
	LM			
	CP Grp			
	PR Mov*			
	PP Grp*			
	Mill Grp*			
	Baptism Team*			
Total Interviews	8	7		

Note: asterix indicates when an individual was interviewed, shaded cells indicate groups which perform a largely social or welfare function whilst unshaded indicate those with an overtly religious or ceremonial aspect

Abbreviations:

C&A Soc	Church and Alter Society
Liturg Com	Liturgy Committee
Womn's For	Women's Forum
Bethany Grp	Bethany Group
Wm's Deb Grp	Women's Development Group
Visit Grp	Visitation Group
Sum Proj Team	Summer Project Team
Folk Grp	Folf Group
Pioneers	Group for those abstaining from alcohol
Child Club	Children's Club
Ladies Grp	Ladies Group
LA & C	Ladies Arts and Crafts
LM	Legion of Mary
CP Grp	Charismatic Prayer Group
PR Mov	Public Rosary Movement
SVP	St. Vincent de Paul Society
UCM	Union of Catholic Mothers
PP Grp	Prayer for Priests Group
Mill Grp	Millenium Group
JBs Club	Jobs Club
M&T	Mother and Toddlers Group
Soc Work	Social Worker
LA Clb	Ladies Afternoon Club
Bridge Clb	Bridge Club
Easi-slim	Slimming Club

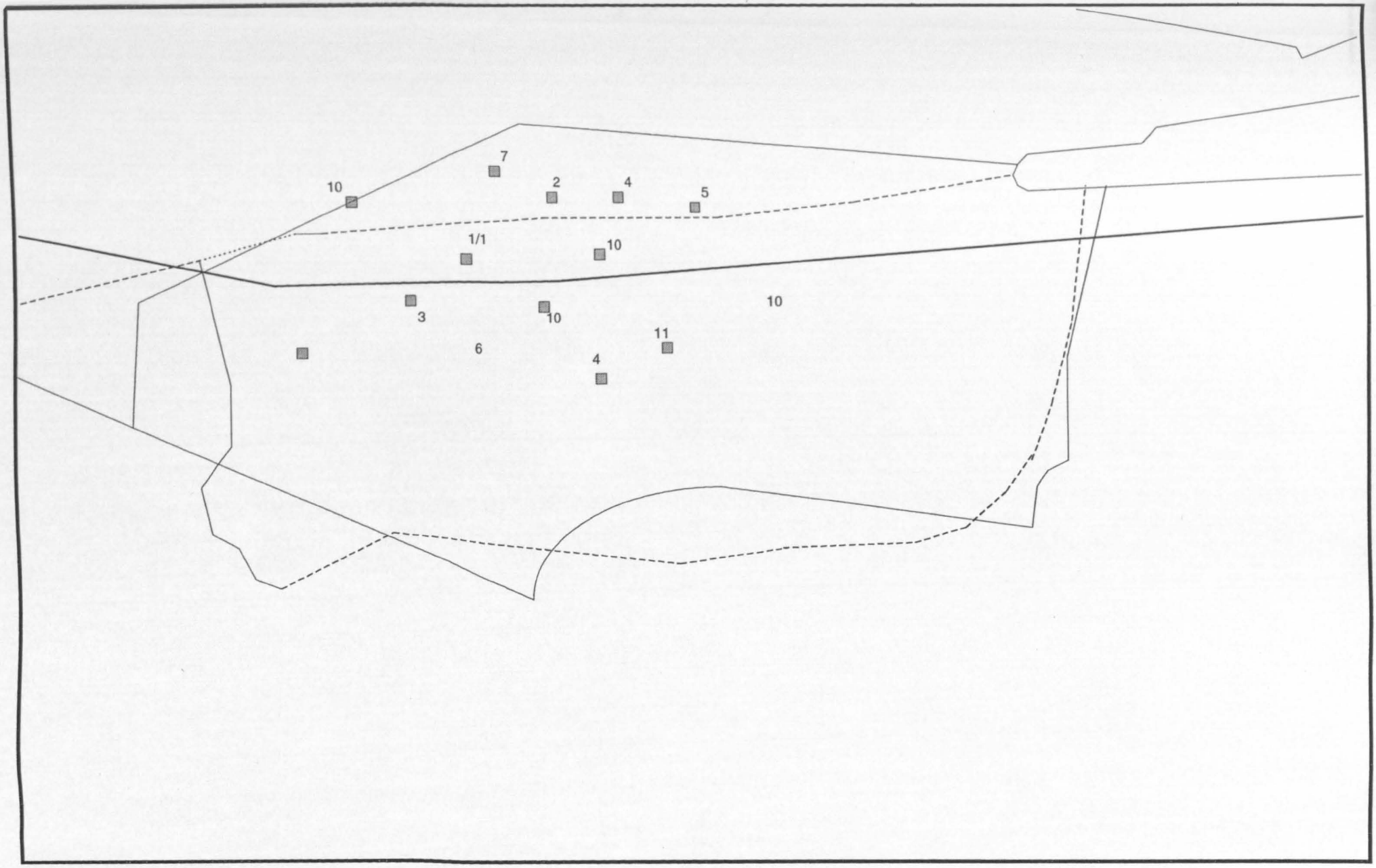


Figure 29. Indicators of social capital, Dublin Parish A

10 INDICATOR

DEANERY BOUNDARY

MAIN ROAD

DED BOUNDARY

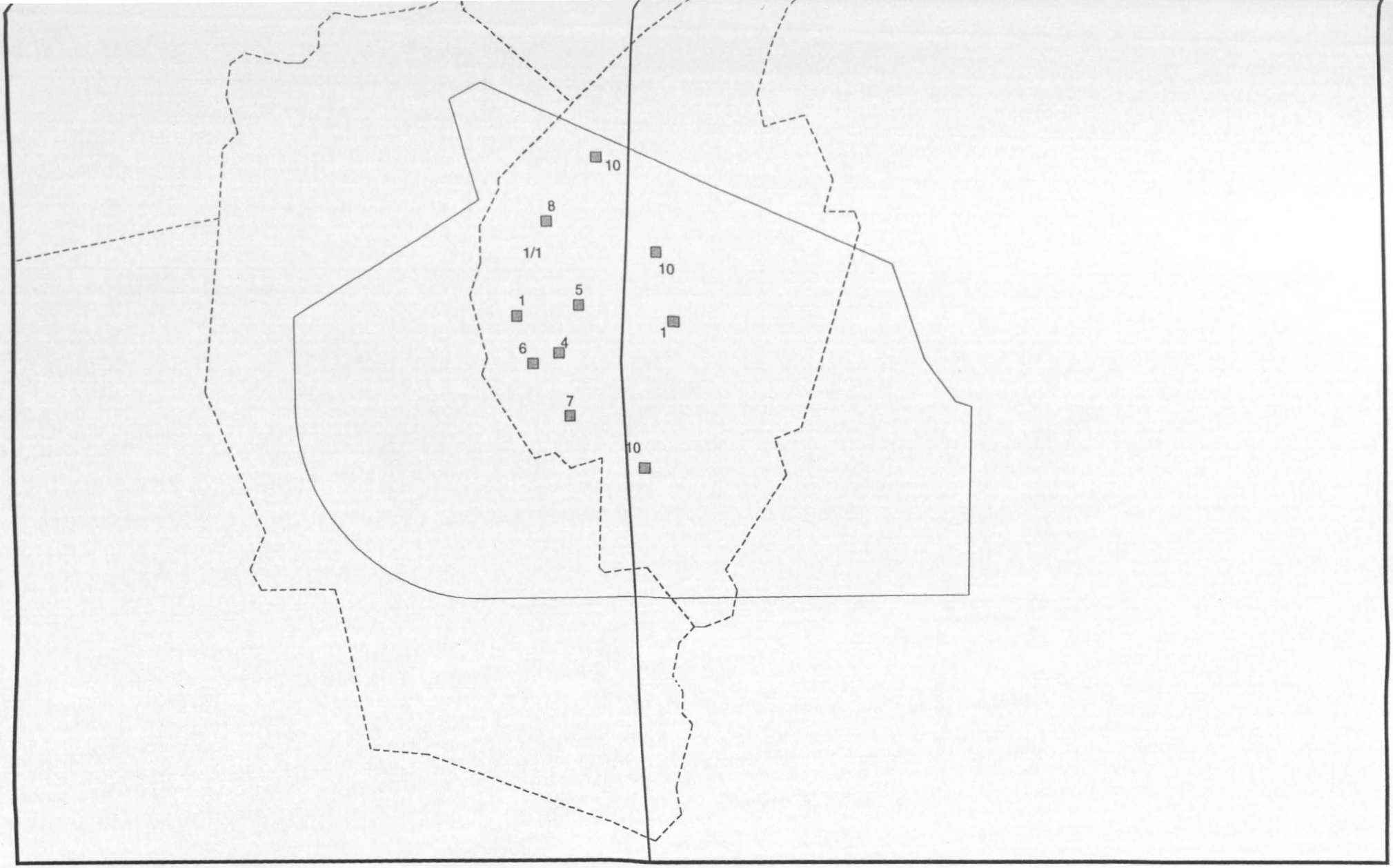


Figure 30. Indicators of social capital, Dublin Parish B

10 INDICATOR
DEANERY BOUNDARY
MAIN ROAD
DED BOUNDARY

relates the picture that emerged to that in the UK diocese. The first sections profile the two Dublin parishes, providing the framework for the elaboration of the interviews which follow.

2. Parish Profile, A

Situated in an inner city area immediately south of the city centre, parish A lies along one of Dublin's main east-west arterial roads. Housing within the parish consists of a mixture of low rise tenement blocks built in the 1960s and 70s, terraced housing dating back to the turn of the century, and more recent semi-detached housing. The condition of this housing stock varies between type. Generally, the greatest degree of decay is evident within the tenement blocks. As Table 1 suggests, the DED is more indicative of certain aspects of deprivation than others. Whilst numbers of one parent families exceed the average for the city – at 8.7% of total residents – and overcrowding appears to be problem with an average 3.31 people per residence, unemployment stands at around 6%, which is near the average for the city. But this picture may be distorted by the presence of significant numbers of students (9% of the population) and the retired (8.95%) within the DED. Moreover, pockets of relative affluence also exist within the parish, masking a picture of near 40% unemployment within the tenement residents. In turn, the main employers for the DED are manufacturing and commerce which jointly account for 52.4% of those who are employed. Accordingly, the largest socio-grouping incorporates the DEF[1] categories. As in previous cases, the range of both church and non-church related indicators of social capital are shown in Tables 2 and 3 respectively (the latter being mapped out in Figures 17 and 18)

3. Parish Profile B

Parish B is situated adjacent to an arterial road which links the city to the southern parts of Ireland, and is centred around a suburban estate, some four miles from the city centre. Whilst both public and private housing are in evidence, the majority is owner-occupied, mostly of a semi-detached type, built in the 1960s and 70s to accommodate the city's urban sprawl. As Table 1 shows, none of the main indicators of deprivation stand out markedly from the average

[1] These include the semi-skilled and manual categories of employment

for the city as a whole. Although a break down of these figures does suggest some underlying trends. Firstly, unemployment in the district electoral division (DED) is both age and gender relative. Whilst male unemployment stands at 11.18%, the same figure for the female residents of the DED is 5.7%. In turn, rates of unemployment are severest amongst those aged between twenty five and thirty four (at 16.9%) for males and thirty five and forty four (12.35%) for females. The duration of unemployment for some residents also suggests a long-term aspect, with 36% of those classified as unemployed within the DED having been so for three or more years. Once again, Tables 2 and 3 show the range of social capital-related indicators associated both with the parish and more generally in the area.

4. Perceptions of respondents, Parish A

When asked to characterise their area, their was a common consensus between respondents that two main problems afflicted the community. These were, in turn, consisted of severe levels of unemployment - respondents estimates of were usually around the 50% mark - in tandem with what was seen to be a severe drug problem, which itself was related to criminal activity in the area. Furthermore, these were seen to be concentrated within one specific part of the parish, namely, the public housing scheme situated to the south. This picture was contrasted with the rest of the parish, which was seen as representative of quality housing containing modestly well-off residents:

> We're talking about a high proportion of unemployed in about 50% of the parish. That would mostly be confined to the flat complexes. The core of the parish would be an ageing population, who came here in the 40s and 50s and would be middle class, would be reasonably comfortable, would have their own homes and so on. Most of that would be private housing. [SVP, Parish A].

In turn, when asked to define his own role with regards to these issues, the parish priest highlighted two separate aspects. The first of these involved acting as liaison between the parish and council operated community facilities in the area. In this capacity he provided support to

the initiatives which formed part of the city-wide 'FALLS'[2] scheme, which provided training in basic - among other - skills, to the unemployed in the area through a range of initiatives at the nearby community centre. In a practical sense, as well as occasionally dropping in to the various groups to offer encouragement to the participants in the scheme, he also administered diocesan based funds which contributed to the running of the programme, keeping in close contact with both volunteers and community workers so as to cater for any requests for equipment and other resources:

> I wouldn't be directly involved, but I'm there if they need help or if they need a cheque signed, you know, that kind of thing. They have a number of volunteers who organise the groups as well as paid community workers. I'd be active in encouraging people to become involved though. [Cleric, Parish A].

When asked to define the influences upon his actions within the parish, the cleric referred to the 'accepted practice' of the Church's involvement in communities more generally throughout Ireland. He added that it was common for the parish priest to adopt a central role in community life above and beyond the religious elements of his role. His perception was mirrored by the views of other respondents, who saw the parish priest as a community leader, although this was defined in different ways. Moreover, whilst many of these also highlighted the role the cleric - or a predecessor - had played in encouraging them to become involved in parish activities, they were just as likely to characterise it in terms of an opportunity to 'get out of the house' or socialise with friends. In terms of the influence of religious ideology upon the actions of respondents, little explicit reference was made, although this doesn't discount its relevance. Indeed, one respondent, associated with the St Vincent de Paul (SVP) group, saw what he termed 'the Christian tradition of caring for the less-well off' as an important factor in his work.

Cooperation among the church-based activities and other bodies was apparent in a number of ways here. One of these was the integration of council funded activities with those of the parish. Both community and parish centres coordinated activities, sharing facilities and human

[2] This is a local urban regeneration scheme funded by the city council – with some additional EU grant aid – which attempts to develop basic skill levels among the unemployed as well as provide job training in the worst affected areas of Dublin

resources. In turn, the diocesan St Vincent de Paul Society also provided funding for projects in the area which gave additional resources to the various groups in the parish. In turn, with regards to the notion of 'inclusivity' of parish-based activities, a number of factors were apparent. Unlike in the UK parishes, where Catholics were usually in a minority, in this case - as in the other Dublin parish - there was a near universality of religious affiliation to Catholicism, not only in the parish but the wider surrounding areas. Given the context, this was not to be unexpected. However, this meant that the inclusiveness of non-Catholics did become reduced to more of a side issue since there were no other churches in the immediate area to make this a concern of the respondents. What was more of a concern was the inclusion of 'practising' as opposed to 'non-practising' - or those who had once adhered to the Catholic faith but did so no longer - Catholics. Many of the respondents expressed the wish to avoid isolating such people from parish-based groups, although some also accepted that this could occur, although indirectly.

But despite this, opinion was that, at least in terms of the parish youth and social clubs, non-practising-Catholics formed a large minority among the participants, their abstention from religious aspects of the community not being seen as a barrier. Another area where this distinction became apparent through the interviews was between the constituents of the 'parish' as opposed to 'community' run groups. Although the church was also involved in many of the initiatives based in the community centre, these were mostly aimed at the disadvantaged residents of the area, who also happened to be 'non-church going'. Moreover, constituents of the parish activities tended to drawn from the more affluent 'church goers' within the area. This pattern was generally explained as resulting from the nature of the activities involved rather than any explicit tendency to exclude certain groups, although it could not be discounted as a factor.

5. Perceptions of respondents, Parish B

Among those interviewed here, the overall impression was that their parish was situated in a moderately 'well off' part of Dublin. Although there wasn't a high degree of material affluence, the levels of deprivation evident in some areas was not found here either. In turn, other than

unemployment within some sections of the local population, respondents did not identify any overarching social problems in their parish. For his part, the cleric interpreted his community role within the parish in a number of ways. Chief among these was what he described as being an 'animator' of people within the community, with the purpose of making them aware of the possibilities for participation in the life of the parish. What he was trying to provide was,

> inspiration, and maybe education, education with regard to what's going on in the community. A lot of people don't know what's happening in the community. They just became passive, apathetic. We're not saying that all this is religious or anything, the emphasis would be on community. [Cleric, Parish B].

He continued by illustrating this by describing his attempts to develop what he termed an 'umbrella' group in order to coordinate the various interest groups within the area. This met on a frequent basis, in the form of what was described as a 'core group' of parish activists. Again, the role of this group was characterised in a number of ways. Not only was it seen as a means of co-ordinating activities, but also as a means of listening and responding to the needs of the community:

> We're trying to get a forum together within the parish that will be a listening group and again, the key word there would be communication. There's two-way communication between all the interest groups in the parish and also between areas of the parish that would be marginalised, it would be a kind of outreach, not necessarily bringing them into the church building but reaching out to some people who don't feel part of the community. [Cleric, Parish B].

Among the respondents, a wide range of factors were cited as having been influential in their decision to become involved in parish groups. Not only were requests from the cleric a significant motivating factor, but so too were opportunities for a social outlet as well as encouragement from friends and fellow family members already involved themselves in some capacity in a particular group. A number of respondents did suggest that their religious convictions meant that they felt that they should be concerned with the well-being of the 'less well-off' within their community and that this had motivated them to become involved when a general request for help had been made through the parish. Moreover, in this instance, the

profile of respondents did not suggest that a particular sub-set of parishioners dominated parish-based activities.

Cooperation between parish-based and other bodies in the area attained a new meaning in this context. This was because, to all intents and purposes, parish groups were largely seen as synonymous with 'community' groups. No explicit distinction was made concerning either in many cases. In general, respondents suggested that the role of the Church was so endemic that distinctions were pointless. In practice this was apparent in the connectivity between what on the outside appeared non-church groups and those directly related to the Catholic parish. A high degree of inter-relation appeared to exist between the participants in various groups, with the result that a significant degree of social 'closure' was apparent.

As in parish A, the issue of inclusivity was largely devoid of a denominational element. But there was some evidence that the constituents of a local Church of Ireland parish participated in the Catholic parish's activities. One respondent suggested that, due to the small numbers this group represented, they were unable to develop their own church-related groups and so had been invited to share in those of the Catholic parish. In turn, a major concern expressed by the cleric was that, through its activities, the parish try and get to the marginalised within the community. He was also eager to emphasis that this was not a religious agenda but rather one of 'social justice', or, as he described it, a way of

> reaching out to people who don't feel part of a community. That's one of the reasons for this forum we're trying to set up, that we've worked towards, trying to get a mission statement of what the forum is about. The key word there would be communication. It would be toward growth, renewal within the community, some kind of outreach, trying to create greater understanding among the different members and then care for people that are marginalised. [Cleric, Parish B].

When asked to define what factors - if any - he perceived as limiting the capacity of the parish to develop a diversity of groups, the cleric identified the negative impact of 'discontinuity' as the chief problem. What he was relating to was the rapid turnover in what he termed the 'personnel' of the parish. This was seen as leading to instability, a confusion of ideas and approaches. As a result, individual groups had their own agendas and ideas but no one group

was strong enough on its own to make much of an impact. Not only were clerics suddenly moved between parishes, but the informal nature of parishioner participation meant that volunteers tended to be on a short-term basis of, at most, a year. It was in response to this issue that the cleric had created the parish 'umbrella' organisation, in order to coordinate effort, assess need and utilise resources where they were most required.

6. Main trends and their implications for theory

Despite both clerics appearing genuinely committed to community development within their respective parishes, there were subtle differences between the roles they assumed. For instance, the role of the cleric in parish B could be conceptualised as more akin than his counterpart to the notion of a 'social entrepreneur' (Leadbeater, 1996) - as discussed in some detail in the previous two chapters. An example of this was the manner in which he had used, what Leadbeater terms, 'previously under-used resources', for the good of his parishioners in transforming a parish steering group for millennium celebrations into a forum for listening to the needs of the community, providing a means of communication - or networking - between parishioners:

> What we're saying is that there are a lot of people out there who want to become involved and need to be animated and need...., information is kind of vital, and part of the communication exercise would be providing information that was prepared by a secretariat of the parish and information would be available around the parish as to what's going on. [Cleric, Parish B].

Moreover, this example also has resonance with Coleman's (1988 p.238) view of social capital as often developing through instruments which originally had a radically different purpose. In relation to the cleric within Parish A, whilst he still exhibited some of the traits of a social entrepreneur, his chief function in this respect appeared to be more functional, and 'hands-off,' in nature. His was a less dynamic and more formalised role. Although, this may have been in response to the unique characteristics and problems of the parish which had prompted a high degree of local authority as well as NGO - in the form of the diocesan St Vincent de Paul society - intervention, which in effect, relegated him to a more subdued role of administering funds.

The picture presented by the two parishes also had some interesting implications for Coleman's (1988) notion of 'affluence', or material wealth, as a factor in the creation and destruction of social capital. What he suggests is that, in areas where material wealth is significant, people are less likely to need to cooperate to achieve mutual needs and so social capital is not unlikely to be created here. This could also be interpreted as an argument against public-funding, whether in the shape of state benefits or local grants. Although, the validity of this view would have to be questioned. Indeed, in the context of Dublin, the parishes offered two separate views on the issue. Firstly, Parish B, which enjoyed a degree of relative affluence, and a developed network of parish activities. Here, the 'wealth' factor was probably more apparent in the nature of the groups rather than their number. The common bond of the Church, to some extent, acting to override this as a influence. Alternately, in Parish A, local authority funding had acted as the 'pump primer' to the creation of a networking capacity through a variety of group-based initiatives. So, it would appear that the influence of 'affluence' - or financial capital - is more complex in nature than it would first appear.

A related factor was the emphasis placed by respondents upon the role of ideology, and particularly Catholic Social Teaching (CST). In the main, little reference was made to the Church's social doctrine, and - unlike in the UK - it was not used by either cleric as justification for their roles within their respective parishes. If anything, they appeared eager to play down the religious significance of their activities in respect to community development. Yet, despite this, both clerics were obviously active in the social concerns of their communities. More generally, although a number of parishioners made reference to what they termed their 'religious convictions', as playing a part in their decision to become more involved in the running of a group, no explicit reference was made to aspects of CST such as its 'preferential option for the poor', that might have suggested a more concerted influence at work.

One of the chief aspects to emerge through the studies of the Birmingham and Liverpool was the relevance of human capital to the spatial patterns of social capital-related indicators within the parishes. Often, this was related specifically to one profession in particular, namely teachers, who formed a particularly active sub-set of parishioners in some areas. However,

evidence from the two Dublin parishes suggests a more complex picture here. Firstly, both clerics were of the opinion that certain parishioners had skills which proved useful when attempting to organise and run parish activities. Moreover, the cleric at parish B saw it as his task to 'match the right person with the 'right role' when looking for a parishioners help. But unlike the UK parishes, human capital was not seen as a finite resource which thus greatly impinged upon the ability of a parish to develop a social capital-capacity. There were a number of reasons for this.

The first of these was that the base population within each parish was typically, and overwhelming, Catholic - the major division was not along denominational lines, but between 'practising' and 'non-practising'. Since the entire population of residents in any given area is nominally Catholic, a lack of human resources, or volunteers, is unlikely to be a problem as it was seen to be in the UK. A negative implication could be seen here however. Namely, that, in a context of abundant human resources, the motivational role developed by many clerics in the UK parishes becomes somewhat redundant - and this is reflected in the perceptions of the two Dublin clerics - so that priests may show little interest in developing the capacity of their parishioners.

The dominant impression with regards to the inclusiveness of church-based activities in the two parishes was - as with many of the factors already discussed - influenced by the pervasiveness of the Church in the life of most residents within the parishes and DEDs, or more generally through the entire city. For this reason, what was seen to be a significant issue in the context of the UK, namely the inclusion of non-Catholics in parish activities, was of less - although still some - significance. A single indication came from parish B, where the constituents of a nearby Church of Ireland parish participated in the social groups of the Catholic parish because their limited numbers meant that they were unable to maintain their own groups. In turn, in common with the majority of the diocese, neither parish contained minority ethnic groupings, with the result that no assessment of this factor was feasible.

Cooperation between the Church and other bodies also defied the discrete boundaries apparent in the UK. It was evident that conventional divisions were insufficient in understanding the

complexity of relationships, and the level of integration, that existed between the Church, state and civil society, and which were played out on a local level within the two parishes studied. Classifications between local authority functions, those of the Church and voluntary sector were also made difficult. To start with, the voluntary sector within the diocese - unlike in the UK, where a multiplicity of actors can be seen as participating - had a strong Catholic identity. Most of the non-governmental agencies concerned with welfare and social care in Dublin are Church funded and run. This was apparent in parish A, where the activities of both the parish and local authority were supplemented with funds from the diocesan based St Vincent de Paul Society. As already seen, in this same parish the local authority worked in close proximity to the parish and other diocesan-based agencies in the creation of local initiatives for the unemployed, as well as those with drug and alcohol related problems.

This 'symbiotic' relationship, between the various actors, could be likened to embedded norms of behaviour and practice between these actors. These are historically and culturally derived and denote the trajectory of the Church's role as distinct from that in the UK. One result of this was that Coleman's notion of the 'closed community' - a community defined around a specific institution which, in turn, engenders a 'richness' of interaction between its members - is reflected in the Church's influence and role in the Dublin parishes. The effect being that, whether in terms of recreational, leisure, and even sporting activities, the parish is often the unit of reference and the manifestation of belonging among residents. This has wider implications to the Church in the UK, particularly in terms of any attempts to develop it's parish-based social capital as part of any strategy to address exclusionary processes or more generally, in terms any attempt to become more relevant to their disaffected constituents. These, and other issues, are discussed in the following chapter.

8. Summary

At the beginning of this chapter the Dublin diocese was characterised as one in which the Catholic Church, in contrast to the UK, had attained a relative hegemony with regards to the sphere of organised religion in society. Accordingly, the task of the chapter was to assess the influence this had upon the patterns and nature of parish-based activities. With this in mind, two

parishes were chosen for study. The first of these, parish A, was situated in an inner-city area which displayed a significant number of indicators of deprivation. The second, in turn, was situated in a suburb of Dublin, to the south of the city, and had indicators which suggested that it did not suffer from the same problems as its counterpart. Whilst factors such as human capital and the notion of the 'social entrepreneur' - which had been so important in the UK parishes - were of some relevance in the Dublin parishes, they were subordinate to the wider 'societal norms' which appeared to underpin the geography of parish-based activity.

What this meant in practice was that the discrete boundaries between church, civil society and state were not really applicable in this context, with the result that nomenclature such as 'community' and 'parish' were often interchangeable. In many ways the two clerics could be interpreted as responding to these norms and accepted behaviours, adhering to the cultural 'template' that their role has assumed above its religious nature in the community and parish in the context of Ireland. A number of factors have probably contributed to this, the hegemony of the Church in representative religion, in tandem with cultural mores developed over many years mean that the cleric is a quintessential part of the fabric of many communities. In turn, the 'permeable' nature of distinctions between Church, state and civil society, again meant that the Church was more likely to interact at various levels than evident in the UK. This was also apparent in the notions of cooperation between the parishes and other bodies, not to mention perceptions regarding the 'inclusivity' of these activities.

Moreover, this suggests a number of implications for the UK Church's attempts to develop a similar function at the local level - a context where these cultural mores do not exist, or if they do they do so in relative isolation from state apparatus and the back-up of a national Church. In turn, the 'closed communities' such as suggested by the Dublin parishes, are unlikely to be possible in the pluralistic UK context. Depending on how you look at it, these factors may serve to limit the capacity of UK parishes to develop similar functions or prove the impetus to a more inclusive and integrated approach here than is evident in Ireland. The necessity of priests in the UK to develop a motivational capacity among their constituents could prove more beneficial to parishioners in the long-run.

What was also apparent from the Dublin cases was that, as parish-based activities increase, local churches increasingly have to develop a coordinating function. Indeed, there was some evidence that this is already happening in some UK parishes. In turn, if the spatiality of the Church's social capital-capacity within its parishes in Ireland is largely defined through cultural and institutional norms, these could just as easily move in an opposite direction from what would be considered a 'socially progressive' church model. Public distaste at the actions of certain clerics could turn opinion away from a participative church. Alternately, the prevailing ethos of the Church may be influenced by a more conservative view of clerical practice so that the spiritual function is seen as taking precedence over the parish priests social role. These factors may prove more comforting to the Church in the UK, in its attempts to assert a new role, than they do for the Church in Ireland, which is seeking to maintain a long established one. The following chapter discusses some of these issues further and also provides a comprehensive summary of the thesis and its main findings.

Chapter 9: Summary and Conclusions

1. Introduction

This final chapter is divided into two sections. The first of these is composed of a summary of both the empirical and conceptual elements of this study, as described in each of the previous chapters. The second part highlights the main findings to emerge through this process, and relates these back to the main thesis questions. A major concern here is to assess the implications of this material in terms of the conceptual and practical understanding of concepts such as social capital, social exclusion and the role of the Catholic Church. As outlined at the beginning of this study, the thesis was divided into conceptual and empirical components. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into five main parts. Part one summarises the process this describes, chapter by chapter. In part two, the chief findings of the study are related back to the original five questions posed at the end of chapter four. In part three, this material is discussed in light of the work of Coleman (1988, 1990) and others (Beyer, 1993; Casanova, 1996; Fox, 1997; Fukuyama, 1999; Putnam, 1993.) In particular, the notion of sociality is introduced as a useful - and perhaps more appropriate -description of the indicators used to represent social capital for the purpose of the study. This prompts a discussion of the spatiality of the Church's sociality in the context of the UK and Ireland. In part four, the potential implications of the findings are discussed both for the Church and policy makers alike. Moreover, this includes a more general discussion on the desirability of the Church as a instigator of these forms of sociability. The limits of an account based upon 'rational choice', are then highlighted and the veracity of alternative 'cultural' and 'institutional' accounts discussed. Finally, in part five it is suggested that more integrative approaches based upon the identification of both micro- and macro-processes, may be the way forward.

2. Thesis summary

At the beginning of this thesis it was seen how the terms social exclusion and social capital have recently entered the policy dialogue in the UK. The Labour Government, inspired by the work of Anthony Gidden's, is seeking to develop a 'third way' as a means of tackling the phenomena of social exclusion, a problem which is increasingly a spatial one. Areas, distinctive because of their low incomes, social-sector housing and urban decay, are increasingly synonymous with the phenomenon of social exclusion. The Government has experimented with a variety of innovative policy approaches in an attempt to stem the flow of exclusionary trends. Social capital has been identified, not only by government but other commentators too, as a potential tool in the amelioration of social exclusion. Yet, the nature of the structures and processes it relies upon mean that it too has a distinctive geography. The Catholic Church may be one actor in civil society which is particularly well placed to act in such a capacity. Not only does it possess many of the forms and structures crucial to the development of social capital within communities but it has a 'grass roots' presence in many of the most deprived areas of the UK. This provided the context of the study and fixed the policy and conceptual debates in which it was based. The discussion in this thesis has suggested two things. Firstly, that if social capital is to be utilised as a tool against social exclusion, the spatiality of this resource has to be defined in some way. Secondly, that existing accounts of its spatiality are insufficient for this purpose.

Following on directly from this general outline of the main themes of the study, the second chapter expanded upon the concept of social capital. Social capital was seen as a concept which emerged through the socioeconomic approach to the understanding of economic systems and their outcomes. As a term it was used to describe the micro-structures of social relations which influence social and economic exchange. From this basis the term evolved to become synonymous more generally with the benefits that could accrue to an individual from participation in certain social structures, such as community and family (Bourdieu, 1997; Loury, 1977, 1987). It was also seen as a form which possesses a definite geography, expressed in two distinct ways. The first of these was through the notion of the 'closed community'

whereby social capital became spatially 'fixed' to a particular location due to a combination of associational ties and localised social structures which promoted interaction. The second way in which the concept of social capital found a geographic expression was the manner in which communities were seen to vary in their 'stocks of social capital' (Putnam, 1993 p.26).

Next, spatial accounts of social capital by Putnam (1993) and others (Fukuyama, 1995, 1999; Leonardi, 1995), were examined. What emerged from this exercise was that these accounts were limited in their capacity to explain differences between stocks of social capital between communities. A number of reasons were given in defence of this view. The first of these related to the failure of previous accounts to fully explain the processes by which micro-level processes influenced macro-level patterns. Yet another problem identified was the 'deterministic' nature of these accounts. As a result, they assumed that social capital was a phenomena that - in the right conditions - could be continuously produced, both 'horizontally' and 'vertically', thus ignoring the influence of political and other 'environmental' factors in its production. The summary at the end suggested that, if the reasons why social capital differed between communities were to be understood, better accounts would need to be developed.

Chapter three, in turn, applied the forms and structures described in the previous chapter to define the potential social capital-capacity of one particular actor in civil society, namely the Catholic Church. It was initially seen how the Church's social doctrine, in the form of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), could provide a basis for the development of a 'public goods' function, as described by Coleman (1988), at the parish level. Following this the structure of - and associated actors within - the Church, were also highlighted as having considerable potential in the generation of social capital. It was suggested that if the Church were to utilise this capacity it would represent a significant resource.

Accordingly, Chapter four outlined just how this resource could be viewed as an increasingly valuable one. The structures outlined in the previous chapter were put in the more tangible context of the Church in the UK and Ireland. Following on from this, the issue of social exclusion was introduced and characterised as a problem which was multi-faceted and complex, incorporating varied strands of deprivation and poverty. In turn, the Labour

Government's particular response to this problem in the UK was highlighted. This was seen to be couched in the rhetoric of the 'third way', as developed by Anthony Gidden's (1999). The Social Exclusion Unit was seen as a concrete policy manifestation of these ideas, one in which social capital was increasingly being seen as a valuable tool in the fight against exclusionary pressures (Cm 4045; Peri 6, 1997). Moreover, the Catholic Church was seen to be one of the bodies included in this multi-actor agency. This was a development which was considered to have a number of interesting implications, both for the Church as well as the application of social capital in an ameliorative capacity.

The main task of Chapter Five was to provide a methodological framework for the investigation of the questions posed at the end of the previous chapter. The debate concerning the oppositional views of qualitative and quantitative approaches, particularly its implications for the choice of techniques for the empirical study, was discussed. As a result of this, it was decided to adopt an approach which rejected the discrete - and often illusory - boundaries imposed by such an oppositional view in favour of one in which the nature of the techniques used were defined, as much as possible, by the requirements of the questions themselves. In turn, whilst it was apparent that a more ethnographic approach would be required to get the level of depth required in order to answer some of the questions, others could be addressed using secondary, survey-based, data, and others still with a combination of both.

A particular range of 'indicators' were also chosen to enable the representation of spatial differences in social capital-capacity between parishes. Semi-structured interviews were identified as a valuable tool in accessing the subtle forms of information needed to understand the processes at work between actors involved in church-based activities. In turn, the selection of sites was defined by a process of 'theoretical sampling'. This resulted in a range of parishes, with a variety of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics being chosen to give a good representative sample of parish types. In turn, in order to maximise access to such sites, three diocese with large Catholic populations were chosen, two in the UK and one in Ireland. In this way, the empirical process included both 'intensive' and 'extensive' elements so that spatial

differences could be mapped both within and between diocese. Just how this worked in practice was also elaborated upon.

Chapter Six related the findings from the first of three case study locations, Birmingham, within which four parishes had been selected for study. At the beginning of the chapter, the spatial structure - and its associated actors - of the diocese, with the parish at its base, was highlighted. Following from this the four chosen parishes - denoted A to D - were profiled in two distinct ways. Firstly their socioeconomic characteristics were highlighted using census-based data. Secondly their 'indicators' of social capital were outlined using secondary sources such as council lists and parish audits. Next, the responses of those interviewed were presented, each parish in turn. After this, the main trends to emerge from these findings were outlined. The implications of these were then related back to the theoretical base of the study. The two subsequent chapters followed the same procedure for the diocese of Liverpool and Dublin, respectively.

3.i. Main thesis findings

An initial stage describing the main findings to emerge through this study involves returning to the original questions postulated at the end of the conceptual discussion which comprised the first part of this study and question how - as well as 'if' - these have been fully answered. By the end of Chapter four, a series of questions had emerged regarding both the spatiality of social capital, the potential of the Catholic Church to utilise this as a tool, and the desirability of such an approach. These were as follows:

a) Is there evidence of social capital-related activity at the parish level?

b) How can this be identified?

c) To what extent does this activity differ spatially; (for example, between parishes)?

d) What are the factors, institutional, socioeconomic or otherwise, responsible for this spatial pattern?

e) To what extent do the instruments of social capital interact with other such networks? What is the nature of the dynamic created by this process?

f) To what extent do the benefits of social capital produced by the Catholic church's spread beyond to a wider community?

With regard to the first of these questions, this study has shown that there were indeed indicators of social capital-related activity within all of the parishes studied at the three different locations. As the second question suggests, this 'activity' had to be defined in a specific sense.[1] For the purpose of the study, it was the 'capacity' to generate benefits from social capital, as represented by certain 'micro-networks' - including community-based as well as recreational facilities - which was used to identify social capital within the parishes. Next the spatiality, or geography, of these 'indicators' was postulated. Through the secondary source of parish audits of activities within diocese it was made clear that a distinct and varied geography existed between parishes in Dublin, Liverpool and Birmingham in terms of the numbers and nature of indicators of social capital in evidence.

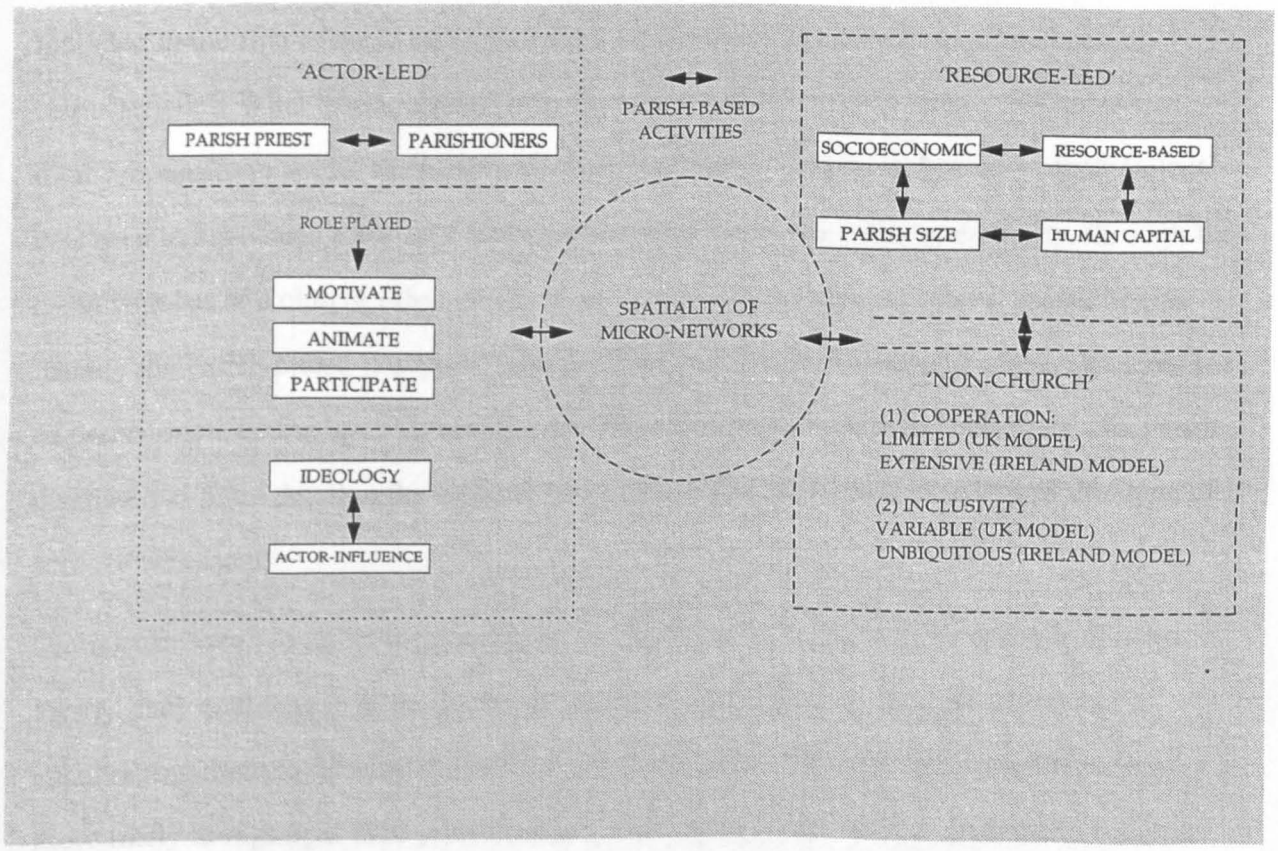
Following from this, the next three questions were concerned with explaining and describing the causative factors in these spatial patterns, whether these be social, economic, institutional, or demographic in nature. As described in Chapter four, the methodology adopted was intended to incorporate as many of these factors as possible. Both intensive and extensive approaches were used, including in-depth interviews and parish audits, in this process. Accordingly, a range of factors were pinpointed as influencing the spatial patterns and nature of social capital evident within and between the three chosen diocese. Below, each of the questions are taken in turn. The first of these being the fourth, relating to the factors, 'institutional and otherwise' which defined these geographies.

ii. Factors defining spatiality of indicators

A number of contributory factors were apparent in defining the geography of church-based indicators of social capital within, and between, the locations of Dublin, Liverpool and Birmingham. Some of these were more distinctive of a particular location, and are discussed in a subsequent section. Other factors were relatively consistent between all three, these being discussed in detail here. For the purpose of this discussion, these factors can be divided

[1] Subsequent sections debate the legitimacy of viewing such as indicators as representative of social capital. For the purpose of the current discussion no qualification is made as such since the terms of reference still provide good indications of degrees of inclusiveness and interaction and also give a preliminary insight into the relevance of specific aspects of social capital as previously defined

Figure 27: Summary diagram: model of church-based social capital capacity



into two general categories. These are, in turn, 'actor-led' and 'resource-led' factors, and are summarised in Figure 27.

Included in the first of these categories were parish-based actors who exhibited certain characteristics. What distinguished them from their fellow parishioners in particular was their propensity to act for the benefit of other community members. Moreover their 'intent' was seen to have been translated into tangible benefits for the wider community, through the establishment of a club or other parish group, or their motivation of others. Indeed it was usually the parish priest, if anyone, who fulfilled such a role. There were also a few examples of parishioners taking upon themselves a highly active role within their parishes – these are discussed in more detail in the following section – although overall evidence of this type of activity was scant.

Clerics were seen to affect the geography of parish-based indicators in a number of ways. Firstly, they could act in a 'motivational capacity' with regard to their parishioners, encouraging them to develop the base of parish activities. The fact that respondents were more likely to highlight their priest as a key motivating factor in their decision to become involved in group formation in more 'active' parishes than those in less active parishes suggests the influence the cleric could have. Secondly, priests could also influence the networking capacity of their parishes by becoming directly involved in the formation and running of groups. Moreover, a number of factors appeared to influence the propensity of a cleric to adopt either a 'progressive' – in a social sense – or 'static' approach to the development of church-based activities. The first of these was the influence of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Among the more 'progressive' clerics, their views were articulated through the language of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), particularly its associated doctrine of a 'preferential option for the poor'. This was often used as justification for their activities. Although it is difficult to make generalisations, it was also apparent that such clerics empathised more with their parishioners, often because they had been born in the area in question themselves, or at least somewhere nearby, and related to their predicament. Less 'progressive' clerics tended to place little importance on CST in their approaches within their

parishes, and rarely made a direct connection to their parishioners in the manner of their counterparts. In turn, a number of factors may have proved influential here. Firstly, such approaches may have been grounded in a belief in a specific role for the Church, one which was less socially oriented. In turn, it may also have involved adopting a strategy which was seen as the least demanding option on the part of the cleric. In reality the explanation probably lies somewhere in between the two.

A related factor here was the difficulties caused by restrictions upon the time available to clerics because of their 'official '- sacramental and ceremonial - duties. This was especially true in the smaller parishes which had no assistant priests as was often the case in their larger counterparts. Yet, the increasing administrative workload also appears to be a factor in many parishes. Clerics often highlighted the additional paper work associated with the charitable status maintained by most Catholic parishes now as a drain upon their time.

For its part, as Figure 27 illustrates, the 'resource-led' category included a range of factors. Among these were both human capital and a range of 'environmental' factors. Human capital - or in some cases, a lack of - was seen as a defining factor in an ability to develop a base of activities by many of the respondents within the parishes (particularly the clerics within each site.) Although, as highlighted in a later section, this factor was most characteristic of Birmingham, it was also apparent to some extent in the Dublin and Liverpool locations. Again, this was seen to influence the geography of parish-based activities because certain parishes benefited from the presence of a greater number of individuals who were perceived to possess the organisational and administrative skills valuable in maintaining groups of this nature.

The 'environmental' conditions (Figure 27) within the parish that were seen to influence the spatiality of the church-based indicators included the socioeconomic characteristics of a given area, and particularly the nature of the activity in question. Accordingly, those parishes whose indicators suggested a degree of deprivation, tended to possess groups with a more welfare-oriented function. Among some of the groups evident in such areas were, credit unions, crèches, housing federations, drop-in centres for those with drug and alcohol related

problems, as well as 'basic skills' workshops for the unemployed. This pattern could be accounted for in terms of the indicators reflecting a specific need within the community. This pattern was also affected by the presence of 'alternate' sources of social capital, other groups and bodies which provided a service or function which could serve to render the church-based intervention unnecessary. However, what the indicators used suggested was that in many cases the church was among only a few such sources of group-based development. This suggested that 'need' was indeed a factor in these cases. Other parishes, those which maintained a multitude of non-church-based indicators, generally displayed a smaller range of activities themselves. Yet other factors also influenced this picture. It is worth noting that the most deprived parish in the study, parish C in Liverpool, also possessed the fewest indicators of social capital-related activities - church-based or otherwise - just two groups, neither of which had a particularly welfare oriented function.

The size of the parishes also influenced the geography of parish-based activities. The general rule was that the larger the parish the more indicators it possessed - and this reflected the broader picture to emerge from the audits of parish activities from the three diocese. This is not surprising given that they generally had access to more resources, particularly manpower, as well as church buildings. Yet, despite this, some of the smallest parishes still exhibited a level and range of activity comparable, proportionally at least, to their larger counterparts. Once again a key role was played by the cleric in these cases.

However, the larger parishes were often associated to a nearby Catholic secondary school by virtue of the significant numbers of Catholics of school age present in such areas. This also influenced the rates of activities within parishes since they were often associated with a large population of teachers who were also constituents of the parish. Teachers represented a sub-set of parishioners who were particularly active in church-based activities. Superficially this was because they were perceived to possess many of the skills necessary to organise and run these small groups. However, their participation also depended upon whether or not they lived within the parish, something they were less likely to do if it was situated in a relatively deprived and run-down area characterised by public housing schemes. It is also possible that

the presence of teachers was 'skewed' by clerics adopting a 'least resistance' strategy when seeking help, rather than encouraging other parishioners who may have proved 'hard work' to motivate.

iii. The 'openness' of parish-based activities to the wider community

Another issue that was assessed within each parish was the extent to which the benefits of church-based activities were open to their wider respective communities in each instance. One view to emerge from the interviews was the universality of opinion, on the part of the respondents, in favour of welcoming non-Catholics to participate in these groups. Yet, in practice, the level of non-Catholic participation suggested that this intent was rarely reflected in the presence of large numbers of participants drawn from the wider community, though there were notable exceptions[2]. Non-Catholics were most evident within social clubs and youth groups associated to parishes where they often formed a significant minority. The reason for this was the propensity of Catholics to introduce their non-Catholic friends to such groups. In turn, the distinction was most apparent in terms of groups which had a more overtly religious purpose, for instance, prayer and religious preparation groups, where non-Catholics were rarely, if ever, in evidence. For its part, Dublin presented a different context from that seen in the UK. The relative homogeneity of the population – in terms of religious affiliation – in favour of Catholicism, meant that the significance of 'inclusivity', in this sense, was less apparent.

Issues of ethnicity and gender, also arose with regard to this issue. Certain parishes, mostly those in Birmingham, contained significant Asian populations. What was apparent from this limited sample was that there was evidence of a degree of cross-over between the Muslim and Catholic communities in terms of the utilisation of resources such as social clubs, credit unions and church-based crèches. Although to extrapolate from such a small sample would be unrealistic it does illustrate the potential for such action. Gender was a more ambiguous feature of the inclusivity of church-based activities. Women were certainly well represented

[2] In fact it was the two smallest parishes studied, respectively, in Birmingham and Liverpool, which exhibited the greatest degree of integration with the wider community

in both the running and participation in parish groups and clubs, although the fact that they tended to relate more to youth groups may suggest that their role was 'gendered' to some extent. But again, it would be unrealistic to generalise too much from the various examples. With this in mind, a later section develops the themes of ethnicity and gender within the wider debate surrounding the Church's social function.

iv. Cooperation with other groups

The study also sought to identify evidence of interaction between church-based groups and other bodies - voluntary groups, local authorities as well as other churches - within the parishes and wider areas. One obvious division here was between the two UK locations and the diocese of Dublin in Ireland. Whilst the overall impression in Liverpool and Birmingham was that very little activity of this nature took place, in Dublin the Church often appeared to be in a 'symbiotic' relationship with the local authorities. The boundaries between civil society and state often appearing blurred here and this is discussed in more detail in a subsequent section. The main aspect in the UK, was not so much the fact that little interaction between the various civil and state bodies occurred at the local level but that in some areas it was non-existent.

Where it did take place, as in parish C in Liverpool, it was more likely to be of an ecumenical nature, local churches cooperating through shared resources and addressing mutual concerns. Local authorities and MPs tended to feature to a minimal extent and actors from the voluntary sector were rarely in evidence. In explaining this picture, a number of factors emerged. Larger parishes were much less likely to seek 'alliances' with local churches or other bodies in order to get access to resources, since they already possessed these and respondents often appeared to value their 'autonomy' in this respect. In turn, the smaller parishes tended to develop cooperative strategies of a limited nature, in order to share what resources were available in the local area. The more deprived parishes also had a greater tendency to have some interaction with the local authority - usually consisting of enquiries concerning the entitlement of parishioners to benefits and eligibility of parish

activities to grant aid - but this tended to be limited, and even less evident in the more affluent parishes.

4. Relating the findings to theory

The purpose of this section is to conceptualise the major findings outlined in the previous section and gauge their implications to the wider theoretical debates. Accordingly, it concentrates upon two distinct themes. Whilst the first of these is an exploration of what could be termed the 'superficial' evidence of social capital activity and its relevance to the work of Coleman and others, the second comprises a more fundamental examination of social capital as a concept and through a process of redefinition introduces the notion of 'sociality'.

4.i. The 'superficial' evidence and its relevance

Describing the evidence of social capital activity to emerge from this study as 'superficial' is not meant in the negative sense, afterall as has already been made clear, this was all that they study could hope to achieve given its methodological parameters. Moreover, some of the findings have relevance to theoretical debates which are not exclusively related to social capital and these also require reflection. Indeed the validity of these findings is justified to some extent by virtue of how the study highlights the limits to social capital as much as anything else. These are discussed in the following section, the rest of this section examines the superficial evidence of social capital activity and its relevance to the theory of social capital. Among the factors discussed were those which were termed 'actor-based', particularly the role of the cleric. It was suggested that the level of activity within parishes could be indirectly and directly influenced by the role adopted by a particular parish priest. In turn, it is possible to conceptualise this role in terms which relate to forms of social capital. Firstly, by virtue of their centrality within a network - in this case understood to be the parish structure - the cleric can be seen as possessing unique access to an array of 'weak ties' (Peri 6, 1997) with other actors - in this case his parishioners - within the system. As discussed in previous chapters, these ties are particularly valuable in the development of social capital. This gives the cleric considerable potential to utilise the flows of information through the parish network for the benefit of the community, coordinating resources and influencing the decisions of

others to act. In an empirical sense, this was evident in some parishes by the priest often being the intermediary for requests for help and new members for certain groups and clubs, offering church facilities when needed by parishioners. Moreover, this role is likely to be underpinned by the normative trust the role of cleric is imbued with (Hornsby-Smith, 1991). It was also evident from the responses of those interviewed for the purpose of this study, that the cleric was regarded with respect, even in parishes which were relatively inactive.

The role adopted by many of the clerics clearly has resonance with Leadbeater's (1997) interpretation of the activities of a 'social entrepreneur'. These are actors who are particularly adept at addressing the needs of communities though their ability to utilise a previously under-used capacity or resources within the community itself. In the context of the study, a number of individuals could be seen as complying with certain aspects or the characteristic behaviour of the 'social entrepreneur' as outlined here. Such individuals displayed both a heightened sense of social need, a commitment to act for the benefit of their community, and illustrated a capacity to utilise their access to resources and contacts to meet these ends. As already noted, these tended to be clerics who had the advantage over their parishioners of access to a wider range of 'weak ties', as well as church buildings, also their status within the parish not to mention their 'representational capacity' when dealing with those outside the parish. A number of these clerics interpreted their roles as 'empowerers', 'facilitators' and what one termed, 'oral animators':

> We get a group of people together and say, "now, what do you think we can do about this". We have an informal group and a number of groups have been formed that way, although they also meet with our [Priests] on a one to one basis, we get called in, although it may not be a religious problem but a problem with debt or drugs within the family. [Liverpool Cleric, Parish A]

Other than the respective clerics there was little evidence of concerted activity of this nature among the parishioners in general. However, there were two notable exceptions, both of which came from parish D in Liverpool, which justify a more detailed examination and suggest that such individuals can have a highly significant impact upon the development of a social capital capacity within a parish. The first of these was an individual who had lived

within the particular parish all her life and exhibited a high degree of commitment to the needs of her fellow parishioners, becoming involved in a number of capacities, including setting up a youth group. The second example concerns a retired individual who has been involved in a number of capacities within his parish and within the diocese as a whole for a considerable amount of time. As well as helping to run the St. Vincent de Paul society within the parish he was also involved in the Justice and Peace movement within the diocese – his parish not possessing a group of its own – as well as being active within the Christian Workers Movement:

> There's a very sensitive report given about people who are sick or ill, that the various members make and that is recorded, but the information remains within, the information is retained by us and the essential element of that work is that people feel that they can trust us without the possibility of their private matters being made public. [SVP Liverpool, Parish D]

A particularly illustrative case of his activities concerns his successful attempts to find employment for a number of individuals within the parish. Both of these individuals conform to a large extent with Leadbeater's interpretation in that both identified a need, utilised their social connections within the parish to meet this need and exhibited a strong commitment to their activities based upon associational bonds. The relevance of these two individuals to the social capital function of the parish as a whole should not be underestimated, since the parish did exhibit a disproportionate amount of activity given its limited size. The degree to which the presence of such individuals within a parish is a chance occurrence or the extent to which their activities are muted by an unfavourable cleric – it is worth noting that the cleric in parish C was seen as helpful to their activities by both these individuals – or other factors, such as time constraints, resources and so on, is open to further analysis.

In turn, Coleman's conception of the 'closed community', a community defined around a specific institution, was reflected to varying degrees in the responses within the sites studied. Constituents of the larger parishes were most likely to feel part of a distinct community centred around the church, whilst those in smaller parishes tended to equate community with the wider neighbourhood beyond their church. In turn, respondents from intermediate sized

parishes, generally viewed the notion of a church-related community with less relevance. In turn, another form of social capital that was superficially evident from some respondents was obligation-based. Such individuals conveyed how they felt obliged to fulfil a particular role in the running of a particular group or club largely because they doubted whether or not anyone would take their place.

As the previous section highlighted, crime also emerged as a trend in defining a 'sense of community' within some of the parishes and could be seen to have an impact upon the geography of church-based activities. Respondents, particularly those in Liverpool parishes, often related their own experiences of having been burgled or having property damaged. Such activity was seen as not only reducing the level of trust amongst local residents but their willingness to act for others. Often, a simple issue, such as feeling safe on the journey to and from a group meeting at the church hall, particularly during the winter months, was highlighted as too risky due to the possibility of being mugged, and even worse. Hall (1998) and others (Peri 6, 1998) have noted the relation between crime and the erosion of trust as well as a more general break-down of sociability within affected communities:

> Crime matters not only because it damages people's well-being and erodes trust but also because in areas of high crime the incentives for young people, particularly men, to enter the mainstream labour market will be lower . (Peri 6, 1998 p.8).

The cleric at site C in Liverpool cited the recent example of the theft of tins of paint, intended for use in the parish hall, from outside his presbytery. Some time later he was informed by one of his parishioners that the paint had been offered to him for purchase in the local pub. The same priest also highlighted the activities of drug dealers within his parish. In another case the members of a Church run club for the physically disabled in the parish had been subject to physical and verbal abuse on leaving the parish hall. The impact of such incidence was apparent in the effect it had undermine trust and engender a sense of apathy but also how it can serve to undermine the efforts, or more importantly the motivation and willingness of clerics and or other potential social entrepreneurs to act in a proactive sense socially. A

number of clerics suggested that they had felt disenchanted because of incidences and discouraged from acting proactively in the future.

Another area where the findings from parishes studied reflected wider theoretical considerations was in terms of the possible significance of more innate competing forms and structures of social capital acting to mute and subordinate the Church's own function in this respect. Portes and Landolt (1996) suggest that social capital from one source can serve to undermine that from another. In certain parishes, particularly in Liverpool, such an effect appeared to manifest itself as a 'defensive' strategy on the part of communities who suffered a large degree of disadvantage. Some responses suggested that these alternative forms of social capital may originate in the cultural and historically-based community structures which were uprooted by the council in the relocation schemes of 1970s and transported wholesale to their current locations, in the process engendering a distrust of the council and a tendency to reject 'outside' intervention from other institutions. This may have served to produce culturally and historically defined social linkages not explicitly dependent upon religion or geography. In turn, these structures and relations act as a natural break upon the extent to which the Church, or any institution for that matter, can impose its own influence particularly in relation to getting large numbers within a community mobilised. Although this appeared to be more apparent in some parishes than others, the more deprived tending to display a greater degree of reticence.

The relevance placed upon human capital by many of the clerics interviewed reflects work by Parry et al (1992), who have made a connection between the additional years spent in education and the propensity of an individual to become involved in community affairs, whether through voluntary work, membership of an association or a more overtly political route. In addition, Hall (1998) suggests that the increase in the numbers of those receiving a secondary and post-secondary education over the past three decades has been reflected by increasing levels of community-based involvement in the UK:

> The average impact of post-secondary education has been to increase graduates' levels of community involvement since the 1950s, perhaps because more students from modest

backgrounds now benefit from a level of civic engagement from which, without such an education, they would previously seen little returns and been disinclined to pursue. (Hall, 1998 p.35).

The picture that emerged from the Birmingham parishes would also appear to be reflected more generally in terms of the operation of certain types of social capital. These tend to be the more affluent sections of society, those who fall into the professional and skilled categories, who are more likely to develop a thickness of association and membership of the nature associated with the development of social capital. However, what also emerged in the context of the interviews was the extent to which other factors were acting to subvert this picture. A central aspect of this is the possibility that the non-professional groups in the parishes were less inclined to participate because of the erroneous idea that they were in same way inferior to the dominant clique of relatively well qualified individuals.

> When you talk to people, they say that it puts them off, you know, they say 'Oh, you teachers...!', you know, it has an intimidating effect which I think is probably true to an extent, but I also think that maybe it's a bit of a cop-out because it's not as if they couldn't do it themselves if they put their minds to it. [Justice and Peace, Parish A]

Hornsby-Smith (1991) also highlights the prevalence of certain sub-sets of parishioners who tend to monopolise activities. Yet it is also important to realise that this pattern may also owe much to a strategy of 'least resistance' on the part of clerics. Parish priests may look upon those from the more professional socioeconomic groupings as their social peers, see a group of individuals who are more willing to participate due to their experience, require little - or less as the case may be – encouragement than another parishioner, who may not possess the same level of experience or belief in their own abilities.

This also suggests that too much emphasis can be placed upon human capital of this nature. Whilst it is obviously a significant component in the development of church-based groups - in some parishes more than others - it should perhaps not be seen as the key factor in the patterns of activity. One reason for suggesting this is the high degree of activity in parishes, notably in Liverpool, where measures of human capital of this nature were relatively low but

parishioners still managed to maintain a variety of micro-networks. Others have also noted that social structures may prove the critical factor in the development of social capital:

> One of the lessons of recent social research is that human capital needs to be matched by social capital - by which I mean the quality of contacts people have and networks they plug into, and the norms of trust, reciprocity and good-will, sense of shared life across the classes, and capacities to organise that these ties afford. (Peri 6, 1997 p.6).

In turn, Casanova's (1997) thesis that the Catholic Church is engaged in a process which is seeing it move away from a state- to civil society-based strategy would appear to have some credence, at least in the limited confines of the Church in Ireland and the UK. There are a number of reasons for saying this. Firstly, proclamations made by national Church bodies suggest an increased concern with the issue of welfare and social justice. Although, the 'preferential option for the poor' has been a mainstay of CST since the 1960s, it is only in recent years that it has been given a tangible expression in Church's calls for action on issues such as social exclusion, unemployment and social need.

At the same time this also gives some credence to Beyer's (1996) notion of Christian elites as 'barometers' of structural change. Statements by the Bishops Conference could be interpreted in this light, after all, social exclusion is linked to wider structural economic changes. Secondly, bodies such as the Catholic Agency for Social Concern, which was recently created in the UK, which have a mandate to directly address social exclusion at all levels, highlight a willingness to act proactively previously absent. This, along with the creation of the 'Churches Urban Fund,' and representation upon the Government's Social Exclusion Unit, would suggest these changes may be of the more permanent variety envisaged by Casanova. In the case of Ireland, there is obviously less scope for an increase in involvement. Both in a civil and state-oriented sense, the Church has maintained an overarching role for many years. However, there is also evidence here that the Church is seeking to ally itself with a more civil-oriented function (McVeigh, 1996).[3]

[3] McVeigh (1996) has noted the adoption of a 'liberatory' doctrine amongst clergy in Ireland in recent years, one which is concerned with redefining the role of the Church towards being a tool of social justice rather than an institutionally defined body.

In a more general sense, as already outlined in a previous section, CST was seen to influence the geography of parish-based activities. It was often used as a justification for a more 'progressive' approach to parish life. Yet Beyer's (1996) notion of dominant discourses within church elites raises another interesting point, namely, how - and moreover, 'if' - such discourses 'filter' down to influence clerics, as well as their parishioners, at the 'grass roots' level. Whilst it seems obvious that a cleric's views are likely to be more deep seated than to be affected to any great degree by trends which might be transient in nature, it is possible that elite discourses could have some influence. Indeed, there was some evidence, if only limited, that proclamations - such as the one made by the Bishops Conference prior to the last election[4] - are eventually diffused downwards, to have a limited impact within the parish. The interviews with clerics within the parishes suggested a number of stages were involved in this process. One stage included the distribution of related texts to the parishes within each diocese. What action the cleric, if any, chose to take in relation to such documents appears to have been largely a matter of their own volition. At the other extreme, some clerics actually discussed the practical ramifications of such text with their peers in their local area, particularly how it may be implemented through their own work. The extent to which CST was an influential factor in the activities of parishioners appears to be limited. Having said this, indirectly - through sermons or literature distributed by clerics - it may have an impact. In turn, although few parishioners referred to notions such as subsidiarity, solidarity or a 'preferential option for their poor', their actions were undoubtedly reflected a more general notion of 'Christian values', which may have been important in their decision to act.

4.ii. The limits to social capital as a concept

In an explicitly theoretical sense, both through the secondary textual sources and the empirical work, this study facilitates a more fundamental questioning of social capital as a notion. At the basis of this is the very tangibility of social capital as both an analytical and descriptive tool, indeed this study could be seen to some extent as a reflection of these caveats and, as such,

[4] 'The Common Good' was published prior to the last election by the Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Its content consisted of a reaffirmation of key aspects of Catholic Social Teaching such as solidarity and subsidiarity whilst giving contemporary resonance to the Church's notion of a 'preferential option for the poor' by referring to the need to reach to 'excluded' within society

offer valuable insights for future research into related areas. Some of these problems have already been charted through the course of Chapter Two. Most notably were issues concerning the levels of theoretical abstraction employed by both Putnam (1993; 1994) and Fukuyama (1995; 1999) which were seen as the basis for questioning not only the validity of their assertions but also the rigour of their respective methodologies. More intrinsically, the empirical work of this study also represents a form of critique in itself - if only by proxy - of social capital as a concept used in relation to diverse social phenomenon, particularly in the manner in which methodological problems were encountered. Yet these caveats are also mirrored in the recent critical interpretations of others (most notably, Portes, 1999 and Morrow, 1999) and as such will be dealt with in some detail in the following sections.

At the core of these difficulties is a very questioning of the validity of social capital as a notion. To what extent is social capital a realisable project in terms of both theory and practice? Portes (1999) has suggested that the answer to this question lies in a process of definition. Whilst social capital has traditionally been seen as a one-dimensional phenomenon it needs to be 'unpacked' into recognisable and - perhaps more importantly - tangible constituents. In other words, social capital should perhaps be seen as 'describing' certain types of processes, social as well as cognitive, which are only realised when they are expressed through either an individual or group gaining a tangible benefit, whether that be in the form of human capital development, access to financial facilities or even more innately physiological and psychological processes. Moreover, these forms would include notions such as, sociability, trust, the development of networks, not to mention the role of specific ideologies in attaining these resources and giving form to them as concrete benefits for communities. Portes cites definitional problems with Coleman's (1988) seminal extrapolation of social capital as the basis for many of the subsequent difficulties of interpretation:

> This rather vague definition opened the way for relabelling a number of different and even contradictory processes as social capital. Coleman himself started the proliferation by including under the term some of the mechanisms that generated social capital. (Portes, 1999 p.5)

Portes also questions the 'novelty' of social capital and suggests that its antecedents are evident as far back as Marx and Engel's work on social control (p.8.) At the core of Portes reinterpretation is an acceptance that social capital should be seen as representative of four main functions, these being, in turn, social control, familial support, networks, and sociability. Extrapolation beyond these parameters is seen by Portes as pushing the abstraction of social capital well beyond acceptable levels of theoretical rigour. In general, these views have also been reflected within the body of this study and its empirical element (as well as this chapter see also Chapters Two and Five). Morrow (1999) goes even further in suggesting that social capital should not be conceptualised so much as a 'measurable' thing but as a set of processes and practices that are integral to acquisition of other forms of 'capital' such as human capital and cultural capital. Most obviously, this has implications for geographic - as opposed to spatial - interpretations of social capital which attempt just this, to measure social capital for the purpose of comparison between locations. In practice it would also give weight to recourse to approaches which adopted interpretations of indicators of social capital-capacity, ones which mapped micro-networks in tandem with some measurement of sociability in each instance, in order to gain an impression of levels of social capital related activity in an area. The measurement of the relative benefits of such activities to specific groups could be done on a comparative basis by some form of audit of outcomes deriving from participation (this is discussed in more detail in a subsequent section.)

What these caveats may even suggest is an inherent difference between social capital that is produced culturally, over a sustained period, and that produced more spontaneously - of a nature envisaged by Fukuyama - through the creation of local groups. Whether or not they can be considered as the same thing may be at question and this lack of clarity may be a significant factor in criticisms of the concept as well as difficulties with its practical application. It could be argued that social capital which develops through a long historical gestation is highly embedded and normative, and that these are traits not apparent in the more spontaneous variety. Fukuyama (1995) would suggest that spontaneity of this nature is dependent upon cultural norms anyway. Yet perhaps much of the difficulty in interpretation

and definition lies in semantics. Social capital has become a generic term to represent the 'pay off' to individuals and communities of developing social relations, particularly of trusting one another, of being more sociable and of networking. As already outlined in this chapter, in practice the nebulous nature of social capital has meant that for the purpose of this study a more circumscribed approach has had to be taken, one which concentrates upon the sociality of a particular institution, namely the Catholic church. As such it is worth developing this theme a little further in isolation from the rubric of social capital.

4.iii. Sociality and 'Catholicism'

If as discussed in the previous section, it is the nebulous nature of social capital which limits its efficacy as a descriptive tool, a number of questions arise with regards to the interpretation of this thesis. What may be required is a reformulation of what church activity at this level, as represented through this study, can actually be said to represent. If at best what could be said to have been retrieved from the empirical work in this study was circumstantial evidence of social capital - references to relations of trust and the networking capacity of certain groups - then a more grounded assessment of what these studies of the Church's activities at this level constitute is required. Indeed, despite these reservations it should also be reiterated that the evidence from the study suggests that such activities do represent a tangible and distinct form. Catholic groups and clubs do tend to perform certain functions, whether related to social or charitable needs, which have the backdrop of the religious institution. Perhaps one way in which these could be generalised is in terms of what has already been recognised as a general 'sociability' at the level of the parish. Not only does this relate to the activities themselves but also the issue of inclusiveness and interaction with other institutions. Sociability could be defined as the preponderance to engender interaction between the constituents of a particular group, spatially defined or otherwise. Although not containing the same theoretical import as social capital it still relates to distinct and similar constituent forms or, more generally, a capacity to create benefits which may derive from relations of trust, as well as the creation of mutual expectations and the development of a networking role within a parish. So it is perhaps more appropriate, whilst still recognising the potential overarching structure of social capital

as a notion, to refer to the Church's parish-based indicators as indicative of levels of sociality. This sociality can still be seen to be influenced by actors such as social entrepreneurs who, themselves, are motivated by a diverse range of factors, the range of activities, as already seen, itself being influenced by the range of resource and actor-led factors discussed in section four of this chapter. More generally, this reflects the limits of the methodology as outlined in Chapter Six, whereby a distinct qualification was made in terms of the limits of the methodology necessitated by the comparative approach taken between parishes and diocese which meant that a more subtle ethnographic approach was not adopted.

4.iv. Spatiality of Catholic Sociality

Another issue that emerged through the study was the innate spatiality of some of the processes at work. However, the reconceptualisation of these processes described in the previous section means that these patterns also need to be reassessed to some degree. An initial point to make is that the limited nature of coverage within the study makes extrapolation or generalisation difficult. Nevertheless, the evidence that was available - both from primary and secondary sources - did suggest that there may be a distinct spatiality with regards to the Church's sociality at a variety of levels. This was evident in differences between the relative importance of levels of church administration, and between the UK and Ireland, rather than intra-diocesan. Whilst in both the UK and Ireland the geography of the Catholic church's sociality was defined through a number of organisational levels and structures - centralised, diocesan and parish - each national context presented a distinct picture or spatiality of activity and/or inactivity. In the case of the UK it was evident that a centralised coordinating capacity was lacking and that this had a number of implications for the spatiality of the Catholic church's sociality. Firstly, it was more ad hoc and piecemeal. This was apparent through secondary material on strategic perspectives (or 'lack of' such material as was the case) not to mention little evidence of coordination between diocese – at least the two investigated for the purpose of this study. Given their proximity it would seem that some sort of interaction or organisational contact between the Birmingham and Liverpool dioceses may have expected to be evident, however this was not the case. Secondly, bodies

such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society did represent a national geography which had some coherence. Although, again, no overarching centrally mediated strategy was evident between locally-based groups, which dealt with their own specific issues in novel ways. This picture differs from other large 'mainstream' churches and religious movements in the UK, notably the Anglican church and the Salvation army which have a distinct hierarchy which defines a geography of sociality from the national to the regional and local. The Salvation Army, in particular, is territorially-based, with distinct regions and centres allocated within a coherent national structure. Perhaps this is less surprising given the militaristic forms it adopts, not to mention its more overtly social and welfare oriented agenda.

In the context of Ireland, however, the picture presented by the Catholic church fits more closely to that presented in the latter examples from the UK. Although it differs to some extent in the reasons for this. The evidence suggested both a highly stratified and centralised organisation based around the main metropolitan conglomeration of Dublin and its hinterland. Although this is unsurprising given the twin factors of its major city status and concomitant density of population, these patterns are probably even more pronounced in Ireland than they are in most countries, with nearly a half of the total population living in the area comprising and surrounding Dublin. Naturally this has been reflected in the highly concentrated nature of institutional and bureaucratic structures of governance and capital in this location and the Catholic church is no different when seen in these terms. Obviously this influences the geography of the Church's sociality to a greater extent because resources are concentrated in this area because this is where a near majority of the population live, social problems and 'ills' are more focused in this most urbanised part of Ireland not to mention the fact that the instruments of media are most apparent here as well. Hence projects such as those which were evident in Parish B which encompass drug and alcohol rehabilitation programmes. This is not to say that rural areas are devoid of such problems (see Cloke, 1997). Indeed, as they themselves are encroached upon by urban areas evidence suggests that they will increasingly see these problems. But what might be happening in terms of the geography of the Church's sociality in Ireland is twofold. Firstly, its role and various functions are more likely to relate to

problems associated with urbanisation in large conurbations. Secondly, the bureaucracy of the Church in Ireland is more focused than in the UK, thus combining a multifaceted role. Not only is it the state religion - which means it could also be seen as part of the dominant sociopolitical structure - it also has a significant cultural relevance in Irish society, not to mention a traditional role in health and welfare provision. In summary, the spatiality of the Church in Ireland can be characterised in a number of ways. It is highly centralised and, with state sanction, highly proactive in social and welfare activities nationally. Beyond the Dublin diocese its activities are regionalised through the remaining Irish diocese each of which maintains certain functions which reflect the needs of a constituent populace. Whilst most of these functions are centrally sanctioned, as well as partially funded, local contributions are also significant. Parish-based activities are also relatively formalised with the majority of parishes containing groups such as credit unions, with other sport and social activity explicitly linked to a parish networks. In this way, spatial patterns could be seen as analogous to social and cultural signifiers and norms as well as distinct social processes. As already suggested, the tacit nature of the relationships involved and the cultural reference and historically defined social significance of the Church are the main factors which define this spatiality.

4.v. Problematizing the Church's social function

However, this reformulation of Church activity at the parish level raises a number of concurrent issues which question the efficacy of the Catholic church as an inclusive form of sociality. Whilst the increasing involvement of religious groups in tackling various forms of exclusion in the UK is evident through the literature (Berthoud & Hinton, 1989; Douthwaite, 1997) and the creation of bodies such as the Catholic Agency for Social Concern (CASC) and the Churches Urban Fund (Douthwaite, 1996; DETR, 1999), the involvement of religious organisations in this manner can be problematised in a number of ways. At the basis of these difficulties are factors which effect the generalisation of the churches 'common associational bond' as well as factors which may act to reduce its normative trust in the wider community and indeed society in general. Firstly, inherent within some religious doctrine there is what could be interpreted as a tacit - and in many cases not so tacit - strain of intolerance. In the

arena of welfare and social care a heightened sense of public morality may prove a mode of exclusion as effective in some cases as social and economic factors to many deprived communities. More problematically still, even when church bodies suggest a liberalised view this may still appear to be couched in a patronising sense of 'forgiveness' when no atonement is sort by an individual for activities on their part which could be interpreted as 'malfeasant' through church doctrine. This is perhaps most evident in the 'section 28'[5] debate which has seen both the Anglican and Catholic churches, in particular, questioning the repeal of this legislation. Other areas of contention include the issue of abortion as well as the ordination of women.[6] Furthermore, these last elements could be seen as indicative of the wider gender bias evident within mainstream religion. Ammons (1999), in particular, has written about the church and the subordination of women.[7] Ethnicity is also a particularly pertinent factor here, with specific religious communities often overtly linked to particular ethic groups. Moreover, the 'deviant' behaviour of certain clerics, particularly with regards accusations of child abuse[8], may further serve to undermine the normative trust with which clerics are viewed which could impact upon their potential to act in the capacity of 'social entrepreneurs' (after Leadbeater, 1997). This is not to deny the possible value of church-based credit unions and other such groups, merely to suggest that the limits and possibilities of such an agenda have to be considered and wholesale acceptance problematised.

5. Potential policy implications of thesis findings

In many ways any discussion around the application of social capital in the policy arena will highlight the central problem of using such a nebulous concept as social capital. The dislocation of theory and political practice defines the utility of social capital as a tool in tackling disadvantage in the UK. Earlier chapters have highlighted the strands which define the emergence of social capital into the political arena. Giddens 'third way' led to a re-emphasis in

[5] The legislation banning the promotion of homosexuality in schools

[6] *The Guardian*, Oct 12, 1999 pT4 (2) 'Immaculate misconceptions' (Catholic church out of touch with ordinary women)

[7] There was a degree of 'genderisation' of roles evident within the instruments of Catholic 'sociality' examined in this study

[8] *The Independent*, June 18, 1999 pS1 (1) 'Children of the house of pain.' (Catholic church in Ireland forced to face up to child abuse)

policy on civic participation as a mantra of government (Cm 4043.) Whether or not this is simply a response of fiscal pragmatism or more ideologically motivated is hard to say. The likelihood is that some element of both is at work. Theoretically, the application of social capital through public policy has been envisaged through novel schemes which seek to promote mixed housing, internet access and the development of extended networks of weak ties not to mention the utilisation of retired people in the community as 'receptacles' of human experience and knowledge in child care. Moreover, innovations such as the 'Community channel' and the ' TimeBank', seek to highlight opportunities as well as offer inducements to people to become more involved in their communities, using their free time in the service of others who are in need. If the Government were wholeheartedly committed to such an approach it is possible to envisage the need for inducements such as increased tax credits or small payments to those receiving state benefits and who tend, unlike the more affluent, to have a less developed sense of 'civic duty' (with good reason.)

Policy-makers will need to reassess what it actually means, not to mention what they think is achievable through the operationalising of such a process. When policy makers use the term social capital the question is do they really know what it means or is it, as may be suggested, often used as a generic terms which encompasses a range of factors such as sociality, civic participation and trust relations which, although related, should be seen as distinct. Obviously, there is some crossover, but definition and application is everything in successful public policy and this is as true of the use of social capital as a tool as with any other theoretically derived notion. Jupp's (1999) study of mixed housing schemes offers a good example of the efficacy of social capital as a prescriptive tool in policy terms. Whilst Peri 6 (1996) would suggest the potential value of schemes which attempted to integrate different social backgrounds and incomes in order to engender the development of valuable 'ties', the evidence of Jupp's study would appear to suggest it's limitations. Jupp's study found was that whilst there was a rich network of groups in many 'mixed' estates, the proportion of residents who actually used them was minimal. Another way of looking at this is in terms of an underused capacity, a notion already alluded to in Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine of this study. What this highlights in

terms of policy application is perhaps two things. Firstly, that a distinct focus is required when policy concerns itself with the development of social capital, particularly in terms of measuring outputs. There is little point in implementing policies if outputs cannot be gauged. Secondly, that a generic terms such as 'social capital' needs to be redefined to a description which is realisable in practical terms. In the case of Jupp's study, for instance, his interpretation of social capital could be seen as more akin to sociability, or the prevalence to interact frequently. But again, the latter is not particularly definitive in policy terms so distinct types of sociability would have to be defined, perhaps centred around a neighbourhood council with representatives from across the community which dealt with local issues.

Nonetheless, social capital, if not in form at least substance, is a component of the Government's policy and as such, strategies for its development are likely to be developed. What this will require as a first step is definition. What exactly are the outputs sought and just how is it envisaged that social capital can be engendered and in what specific form? These are the questions already posed in this thesis and, as seen, they are difficult to answer. One way in which to move forward can be suggested through a specific example. Initiatives such as the Government's Neighbourhood project seek to develop community-capacity through self-help. Moreover, the development of social capital is seen as a central aspect of this. The question remains, however, what is the Government actually seeking to do in such communities? Is it simply seeking to encourage sociability, or a culture of self-help perhaps? This may encourage the development of trust between members of the community and then again it may not. In turn, what would be the hoped for outcomes? Reduced crime rates and higher employment are two of the more obvious examples. Again, sociability in itself is no guarantee that these will be achieved. Self-help needs to be directed and focused not haphazard if real benefits are to be achieved. Individual neighbourhoods offer distinct problems and networks of functional or dysfunctional networks and policy has to recognise that responses need to be measured to these needs. No generic blueprint can be applicable to all deprived areas. So a first step for policy is define the specific problem and then assess the potential value of self-help and sociability – as more functional terms than social capital – in addressing these. Two factors are crucial here.

Firstly capacity, or are residents – and it has to be the majority – willing to participate in job clubs, self-help groups and so on. If they are not, incentivising may be needed through training or 'loyalty' payments as already suggested - tax breaks would seem to be more an incentive directed towards the wealthy. Secondly, it must be a reflective process, one which encourages participation at all levels, from implementation and running to assessment. Only in this way can good practice and concrete benefits be achieved. Also included in such a iterative process could be a social auditing of resources such as human capital as well as physical capital in the form of meeting places such as community centres and social clubs. However, there are limitations to any agenda which seeks to explicitly to utilise social capital – as opposed to its constituent parts – in forming social policy as Portes (1999) suggests:

> There is little ground to believe that social capital will provide a ready remedy for major social problems, as promised by its bolder proponents. Recent proclamations to that effect merely restate the original problems and have not been accompanied so far by any persuasive account of how to bring about desired stocks of public civicness. (Portes, 1991 p.21)

Yet this does not preclude a significant role for social capital and its constituent elements in the wider, holistic view of the Labour Government to social policy. It seems obvious that social relations have always been and will remain a basic element in peoples general well-being in a variety of senses, economic as well as social. In some cases the development of community relations may act as the catalyst for wider benefits including reduced crime and improved services. In other cases more financial pump-priming may be required before such developments are feasible. Whatever the case the ultimate lesson seems to be that a balance is the key to helping deprived areas and, in some cases, helping them to help themselves.

It is also important, regardless of the already highlighted problematical nature of Church involvement, to suggest possible future strategies on its part. With this in mind, the following passages draw out policy implications which may be more explicitly directed at the Church if it is to develop a successful and inclusive approaches in this regard. A initial point that was evident from the findings was that the more 'progressive' priests within the parishes studied

exhibited more of what could be termed 'people' skills. They were more inclined to place emphasis upon their motivational and organisational skills in order to get members of the community working for themselves, skills more akin to the role of a 'social entrepreneur' than a parish priest. However, skills of this nature are often tacit and innate by nature, which makes their replicability in multiple context difficult. In most cases, they are likely to result from years of 'in job' experience on the part of a cleric, through dealing with people from a variety of backgrounds.

What this suggests is that if the Church - especially in the UK - is to develop a more progressive priesthood, one which is more responsive to the needs of parishioners, particularly those in deprived areas, a change of a cultural nature is going to be required to alter expectations, norms and understandings both of clerics and parishioners. An indication that such a change is occurring comes through the ideas of Casanova (1996) and events within the Church in the UK, where it is increasingly attempting to develop a stake in responses to issues such as social exclusion. But this is only one part of the equation. The difficult part will be to interpret these approaches at the grass roots and to actively make a difference within parishes throughout the UK. As time progresses, however, the demography of the priesthood changes and, gradually, it may start to become more characteristic of the 'progressive' tendencies that were first developed through the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s (although it could just as easily go in the opposite direction.)

Yet whilst this may or may not be occurring, the Church could still look at a range of strategies with which to develop the capabilities of the priesthood. Targeting the more socially committed priests to parishes which could best benefit from their efforts would be a possible start. But the chronic shortage of clergy in the UK makes such 'cherry picking' a difficult, if not impossible strategy. Another option, one which emerged as a favourite of the clergy interviewed, was to increase the role of the laity within the parish. Not only could this free time up for the parish priest to develop other aspects of the parish, but also engender a more 'inclusive' parish structure. Many clerics saw the way forward as one whereby they maintained a 'hands off'

approach to parish activities, delegating this role to others and, instead, utilising their motivational capacity to engender a more participative culture within parishes.

The most worrying factor for the Church to emerge through the study must be the impression that parish activities often take place in relative isolation. Not only is this in terms of a lack of cooperation with local authorities but also, more generally, the voluntary sector. In turn, although there was more evidence of more of this type of activity in an ecumenical sense – that is with other churches – this seems to be largely confined to the smaller parishes as part of a 'resource maximising' strategy. This can be seen as having a number of implications for the Church. Firstly, whilst it is possible for parishes to maintain a range of activities which can help to alleviate the impacts of social exclusion, in the end there has to be a limit to what can be achieved in this way. For this reason local churches must seek to develop what can be described as 'local coalitions' of actors within neighbourhoods and communities. In partnership with other local churches, voluntary bodies, pressure groups – including bodies such as the police – the Catholic Church can make its own unique contribution. Otherwise, it may remain isolated and relatively exclusive to its own parishioners. Undoubtedly, other factors will influence its success in such a strategy. As already suggested, moral debates concerning issues such as abortion and the implicit male-gender bias within the Church may prove obstacles to greater cooperation in some instances. For this reason it will also be important for the Church to become more accepting a heterogeneity of views, whilst, in turn, agreeing upon the need for action in response to social exclusion.

6. Value of 'parallel' accounts

The discussion in previous chapters has concentrated upon issues of representation and validity of interpretation, in particular the notion of sociality as a descriptive tool representative of social capital. This debate defines to an extent the limitations of the study in an empirical sense. However, at an even more abstract level this study could be seen as founded upon a 'rational choice' perspective of geographical patterns of social capital. This is because each parish was interpreted as a 'network' of social relations within which actors were seen as making decisions to act in a particular way – in this case, whether or not to initiate group activity – for the benefit

of the wider community. Accordingly, the study was concerned with identifying why these 'rational choices' were made, the influences upon the decisions of certain individuals within the network to act proactively. In its own distinct way, this has proved a relatively useful (if limited) explanation of the factors which influence the spatiality of social capital indicators.

However, the basis for Coleman's abstraction of social capital, namely rational exchange theory, can be questioned (Hechter et al, 1992; Münch, 1992; Scheff, 1992.) In particular, criticism has arisen with regard to what many perceive to be deficiencies in the emotional bases of the theory in relation to human action (Simcock, 1993; Scheff, 1992.) This neglect can be argued to be particularly apparent with regards to Coleman's use of social capital as an interpretative tool in accounting for educational outcomes. However, others have pointed out that this omission does not significantly differentiate rational exchange theory from other current theoretical accounts of human action, rather rational exchange theory remains a valuable tool in the process of 'decreasing abstractions' from theory to practice, of which social capital would appear to be a particularly good example, in tandem with other accounts which emphasise normative commitment rather than rational exchange (Lindenberg, 1992.) Evidence of this process is readily available in the numerous studies relating to educational outcomes and civic development, which emphasis the efficacy of social capital as both an explanatory and prescriptive tool in the process of relating theory to practice. As Furstenburg and Hughes (1992) have argued, the evidence suggests that social capital is an important determinant of successful outcomes, educational, emotional or otherwise (p.580.)

What this perhaps points to, more than anything else, is the value of a more integrative approach, one which rejects the discrete boundaries of theory and process. For example, the processes which define social capital occur at the micro-level of social interaction. Forms, such as trust and obligations, are products of individual actions and interrelations expressed tangentially through a wider community. Whilst attempting to isolate these processes and their wider networks constitutes an adequate approach to defining the factors which cause them, it is also a rather piecemeal view, one which ignores the influence, in particular, of cultural and

institutional influences. For this reason, alternative 'parallel' approaches may prove particularly valuable at identifying these macro-level processes.

Institutional processes can also be seen as dictating norms of behaviour within parishes, suppressing the 'rational choices' of its members to act in a particular way – much as Fox (1997) suggests. Within the Church, a seed-change in approaches at the national level may influence a more socially progressive or even regressive approach within parishes. Another example would be if national or local policy meant that local authority funds were directed at a particularly deprived area, so that functions previously undertaken by the Church were no longer required, thus replacing the social capital-capacity of the previously parish-based activities.

In turn, community development theory also offers a potential framework for understanding the processes which define the spatial patterns of social capital. Indeed, practitioners in this area have become increasingly aware of the value of the concept of social capital, particularly in relation to small and intermediate-scale group based projects aimed at creating a functional civil society in areas which could most benefit from such activity (Wilson, 1997; Lauria and Soll, 1996; Newbrough et al, 1997; Catanese, 1996; Meck, 1996; Hanna, 1994). Their new approach is based upon a sensitivity to the contextual variances which characterise particular locations and, hence, define any course of remedial action. The development professional is seen largely as an agent of change or a facilitator, who can utilise a number of tools in what Wilson (1997) describes as an 'iterative' process.

Another approach could involve adopting a more cultural perspective with regards to the issue of social capital, how and why it is engendered in some places and not in others. This is because it is possible to interpret social capital as a cultural 'phenomenon', one which is defined through a myriad of local 'cultures', moulded, moreover, by a range of localised factors and influences, as well as more general cultural - whether governmental, societal or institutional - mores from outside. Whilst in some areas there would be a strong culture of social capital, in others it would be weaker. As Peri 6 (1997 p.7) suggests,

> Tackling social exclusion means changing cultures – and building social capital is fundamentally a cultural strategy. This applies not only to cultures within government and among the private and voluntary bodies that deliver public services but also among the wider public and among socially excluded.

However, identifying a local culture of this kind in an empirical sense would prove more difficult than isolating a set of 'rational choices' among certain actors. Such an account would be all encompassing – micro- and macro-level explanations could be seen in tandem as part of a 'whole', a set of influences upon actors and institutions which defines the development and role of social capital in an area. Yet, despite the difficulties in identifying these processes, a more ethnographically based approach may prove successful. Through the use of tools such as participant observation and prolonged exposure to a relevant community, it may be possible to define – if only in a very rudimentary sense – the 'culture' of a very defined area, and how it influences the micro-relations which define social capital.

7. Concluding Remarks

This thesis has addressed a number of themes of contemporary relevance to both theory and policy. Central to these was the manner in which the concept of social capital has been adopted by the Government in the UK as a tool in the amelioration of the effects of the multifaceted phenomena of social exclusion. Fundamental to the arguments developed throughout this thesis was the view that the spatiality of both of these concepts was crucial to any understanding of whether or not social capital is a viable option in such a strategy. Moreover, it was suggested that existing accounts of the spatiality of this resource were insufficient for this purpose. For this reason it was proposed that the study isolate one potential source of social capital and develop a variety of means of representing and defining it as a resource in a spatial sense. For a variety of reasons, the Catholic Church was chosen for this purpose. The first of these was that the Church in the UK has recently sought to develop a role with regards the issue of social exclusion. Secondly, it was suggested that the combination of a socially oriented ideology and parish structure meant that it possessed an extensive capacity to generate social capital. Lastly, there was its 'grass roots' presence in many of the most deprived areas of the UK, such as Liverpool and Birmingham, and Dublin in Ireland.

The resultant study conducted within these three city diocese suggested a number of things. Firstly, spatial representations of social capital could benefit from a more ethnographic approach, which, unlike Putnam (1993), attempt to identify the micro-processes which define the macro-patterns of spatiality. Furthermore, using 'indicators' - such as numbers of group and club-based activities - of social capital to suggest a 'capacity' within an area to develop social capital can prove a useful tool in assessing an areas propensity to develop networks which can help in the fight against social exclusion. Moreover, whilst these indicators may in practice be more representative of a sociality function, this can just as easily be interpreted as an integral part of the wider lexicon of social capital. It was also suggested that future accounts may incorporate 'parallel' interpretations which highlight cultural as well as institutional factors. Scope also exists for the integration of pictorial and spatial representations of social capital with more qualitative material through the creation of GIS-type systems.[9] This could prove particularly valuable in enhancing the integration of qualitative and quantitative sources of data.

This thesis has shown that - whilst there are limitations - the Church, particularly in 'local coalitions' with other groups, could make an important contribution in the fight against social exclusion. As church attendance's - not only Catholic, but also more generally - continue to fall, and their constituents continue to become more representative of the more elderly age groups, the development of a social capital capacity may not only become a strategy of social justice but one of survival for the Church itself. In the short term, this trend may not diminish the potential of the Church to utilise its social capital capacity. But, in the long term, it is only by becoming more relevant and more responsive to the material needs of those in the variety of communities it represents, that the Church hope to survive . It has already begun this process in the UK. More generally, it is apparent that in a context of limited resources, social capital may be the difference between the success and failure of initiatives such as the Labour

[9]As Crang et al (1997) highlight, existing qualitative programs are limited in their ability to incorporate spatial variables. However, increasing numbers of local authorities in the UK are developing GIS databases of community facilities and resources which could be intergrated with packages such as NUD.IST and Atlas/ti, which allow some limited interaction with SPSS, to develop an integrated, qualitative and quantitative strategy in the identification and classification of social capital in local areas

Government's neighbourhood programme. Understanding the spatiality of the concept may be a crucial first step. Given the significance of this resource in the fight against exclusionary trends in society, geographers should be seeking to develop new ways of interpreting social capital.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule, interviewee titles and numbers

Interviewee/Date 96-97	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N
Birmingham Parishes (A-D)																							
M & T Group Organiser (A)			7																				
Youth Club Organiser (A)			8																				
Over 60s Club Organiser (A)			8																				
Credit Union Worker (A)			8																				
UCM Organiser (A)				14																			
M & T Group Organiser (B)						25																	
Junior Youth Group Organiser (B)						25																	
SPRED Worker (B)						25																	
SVP Organiser/Visitor (B)						26																	
JP Group Worker (B)							4																
SAC Organiser (B)							5																
Holiday Project Organiser (B)							5			15													
LM Group Organiser (C)										15													
CD group, Parish C										16													
Youth group, Parish D											4												
St Vincent de Paul group, Parish D											5												
Ladies of Charity group, Parish D											5												
Legion of Mary group, Parish D												3											
Group for the Handicapped, Parish												4											
KINMOS group, Parish D													7										
Liverpool Parishes (A-D)																							
SVP Organiser (A)													12										
UCM Organiser (A)													12										
Youth Group Organiser (A)													13										
J&P Group Organiser (A)														18									
Guild of St, Stephen's Organiser (A)														19									
PTA Member (B)															2								
UCM Organiser (B)															2								
SVP Organiser/Visitor (B)															3								
Youth Club Organiser (C)															3								
Senior Citizens Group Organiser (C)																6							
SVP Organiser (C)																6							
Senior Citizens Group Organiser (D)																	23						
SVP Organiser/Visitor (D)																		11					
Dublin Parishes (A-B)																							
Women's Forum Member (A)																			25				
Visitors Group Worker (A)																			27				
Scouts Group Organiser (A)																				1			
Pioneers Group Worker (A)																				1			
Millenium Group Organiser (A)																				2			
Baptism Team Leader (A)																				2			
Childrens Club Worker (B)																					14		
GROW Volunteer (B)																					14		
Ladies Club Member (B)																					14	27	
SVP Worker (B)																						27	
Credit Union Worker																							2
Pioneers Group Worker																							2
TOTAL INTERVIEWS : 45																							

Appendix B: Transcript

PARISH B (BIRIMINGHAM): Justice and Peace Organiser:

Q: What I'd like to discuss with you is your role within the Justice and Peace group...

- *Yer, basically what it is erm,..it's the Justice and Peace Group within the parish, it's called [..states both acronym and full name of group..], and it's got sort of erm, well because of the erm, I think the parish is, has, charitable status now, its got certain constitutional, well its got guidelines. It has to be overseen so, well lets take an example, if something came up, and there was something in Britain, we're not allowed to go along. It's exclusively concerned with overseas aid, so its [uses groups acronym]. Now that's kind of a useful title because, if there's no second collection in Mass there's a sack at each of the exits, people, you know, it's an American thing, they associate [groups acronym] with sack.*

RESPONDENTS SON ENTERS ROOM WITH COFFEE

- *So, erm, that's what they think of it, they put their money in the sack if there's no second collection, it's quite handy, you know, and, basically it's made up of people who are just volunteers. There's about half a dozen people erm.., it's sort of, I wouldn't say it develops, we've had a couple of people join and a couple of people leave, erm.., but we have a treasurer and myself who runs it. So it has be done properly because its handling peoples money.*

Q: Sure, sure, so when did it actually come into operation in [..name of parish...]?

- *It would have been, erm ..,I think the church was built around about 1980 and before then they used to have mass in the..., it was like a satellite of another parish, in the school in the hall. So I'd say probably in the late 70s. The parish priest then - is now a parish priest and teacher for the parish that feeds our school - so he started it off and erm, I joined in about 1984, so I'd say probably late 70s and I think er.., there might be one or two people who've been there all along erm, the thing is getting more people to join because..., any parish groups always getting stretched in terms of membership.*

Q: Sure. What are the actual dynamics? How often do you meet as a group? You said a dozen...

- *Yer, there's about half-a-dozen, ten or twelve people, who are interested. We meet on the first Monday of every month up at the parish hall and erm that's how we look at what we've done and look at new projects in addition to that we do*

occasionally, well, various things. For example, in October, November, in the autumn, there's a retreat that's done. People over there.., erm, it's done at the local convent. We do a quiz every, er, year to raise some money

Q: Is that the main source of finance?

- *Well, funnily enough, money's not the issue problem here, because we're quite a wealthy parish and people are very generous and, it's a bit of a double edged sword really because they're prepared to give in terms of a second collection, which is quite helpful, but they're not interested in giving any commitment in terms of time. So finance isn't a problem because we have quite a sort of sufficient fund. Erm, we've done other things. For instance, we've had CAFOD, we've had other agencies who've come, we've held evenings in the parish, but it's only been ourselves who have turned up. People aren't interested enough to..., they want to give I'm sure, you know, it's probably a guilt thing or whatever, they're prepared to give. They're not really interested in where the money goes because they trust it's going to go to the Third World. Erm, but I think that's a problem in the parish, well not just this parish, of people being involved directly with it. So that's it, we meet the first Monday of every month and..., unfortunately, finances are everything, because we have to make sure that with every going out we have to make sure how much we've got. The banks sort of funny, you know, we've got to be in the right account to get some interest. Basically, they don't want to be bothered with us because it's just a hassle for them so you've got to make sure that you're getting the maximum in terms of your finance but also I've got enough to send off to all the projects.*

Q: So what is your specific role within the group?

- *I run it...*

Q: Completely?

- *Well...yer. We have a treasurer who, because I don't think it's very healthy for the person running it to have access, I'm not a signatory on the account, I mean I could be, but for my own personal sake...*

LAUGHTER

- *...because no one's going to check. Canon [..name..], who's the parish priest, he's a signatory on any of the accounts, but obviously new delegates the responsibility to the group and so when I say I run it, we usually get inundated with appeals and projects and if there's any paper work I sort that out, I keep the minutes up to date. For example, what I've produced - because we did have a parish council - and on the parish council er, you know, the SVP the Catholic Women's league,*

that sort of thing, would have to report back erm, that was the summary of the sort of activities that we did in 1996, which you can have..

HANDS RESEARCHER LIST

- *...which we produced. Erm, some are long term, some are one off's er...for example, we had meetings like Amnesty, and that's just come through today, come through the door.*

SHOWS RESEARCHER LEAFLET

- *You know we are affiliated to Amnesty because they are excellent in terms of their, you know, work. We do the standard thing at Christmas with the cards. In fact, we've had one or two responses to it, which is pretty good going. So we're affiliated to Amnesty and also, of course, CAFOD is a big thing. They send us their booklet and their newsletter and so on. So at the moment we're supporting, they've just had that flooding in Bangladesh. So we deal with CAFOD, we deal with them, the sort of 'national' agencies, but we also like to identify groups which are sort of, you know, neglected and um, we have, so we tend to give... Amnesty we're affiliated to anyway, but if something comes out of CAFOD we will send £200 through the banks to Bangladesh. But in addition to that, we support one of the Romanian orphanages and in addition to that also, we support something called St. Peter the Apostle. Now the main thing is obviously the Romanian thing, but we thought instead of sending £200 as a one off, we have standing, a direct debit, so we send them an amount each month. So they can rely on that coming in rather than, you know. St. Peter the Apostle is a Catholic body that is to do with a seminarian group that is training priests in Southern Europe since Eastern Europe opened up in the early 90s, you know, and the Catholic church has become acceptable. So we assimilated with that, rather than send a one-off payment. So they have a direct debit so they have an amount every month and from their point of view, obviously they'd like more, but because they know a certain amounts coming in their able to do other things.*

Q: So how do you actually decide the groups that you get involved with?

- *Well, obviously there's a bit of a ...People who are on the group usually have an interest in something. For example, we have one person whose had long-standing dealings with a priest in Nigeria. I don't know how it started. He must have been the priest somewhere. So we, erm, deal with him, Fr [..priest's name..], he's in Nigeria. So he or she will deal with him on a personal level as much as anything and so, he might say 'there's been no rain', you know, and send something to him every so often. There's another priest in Tanzania who erm, some sort of thing, we*

deal with, who'll ring up and say 'we're desperate for so and so, can you send some help?'. So that's the sort of things, that sort of piecemeal approach. In addition to that, a couple of years ago a priest came to the parish from India. Again, there's certain parts of the world you expect..., this was actually an Indian priest from India, Fr. [.. priest's name..] and he was actually building a water mill in India and he came over here, he must have had some contacts with somebody, but he came to the parish and met us. And we used that as a project and supported it for about two years and, the thing of it was that if he could raise a certain amount of money the agencies over there would match it, so whatever we produced.., and he got this water mill. But that sort of thing is.., when I say we deal with international organisations that's one thing, but if you can deal with something that's a bit more homely, a bit more parochial, you know, you see the effect. He's sent us loads and loads of letters, photographs, that we display and it's more meaningful then because... CAFOD, although it's very well meaning, it does good work, this sort of thing is more intimate, whereas in terms of projects...erm, for a few years, well up until this year, we've sponsored individual parishioners, usually the daughters or the sons. They come along and they're going to work. One went to Bangladesh, one went to..., I can't remember now, and they need sponsorship. So we send a parishioner which, again, goes down quite well because it's someone from the parish going out there to do voluntary work, other than international organisations. So the problem we have is getting their air fair, you know, through Raleigh International and other organisations. What we've then done is asked them to prepare a report when they've returned so we can get some sort of accountability. So that's another kind of aspect to it.

Q: How did you actually become involved in the group yourself?

- *Well, it just...Well, when we joined the parish we went to a meeting and there were various things on there and I think this was probably the least supported and, you know, I suppose I was interested in....But it just seemed that if I'd gone to a youth club or something, there's plenty of helpers but this seemed to be in need of a bit of a supporting hand.*

Q: What about the other people in the group, what do they do? You're a teacher..

- *Yer, well, um, there's another teacher, a few teachers in fact, one person's retired, there's a dentist, erm, one used to work in a bank, a cross section really. I mean they thing is, you know Birmingham is economically mixed. This is a quite .., it's not Solihull so it's not very accurate but it's quite wealthy. So, unfortunately, the people who get involved in these sort of things can be professional people.*

Q: Sure, sure, I've talked to Fr. [.. priest's name..] at [..parish A..] and erm.., I've also been to another parish and I was telling them how, um, the amount of groups, comparing it to Sparkhill and given the size of the Catholic population in each which is quite similar, there was quite a small number of groups and he said, well, they've got quite a large number of professional class who get involved in these things, a lot of teachers get involved, professional class people.

- *When you talk to people, they say that it puts them off, you know, they say 'you teachers', and it has an intimidating effect which I think is probably true. But I think that might be a bit of a cop out. I mean it's not as if.., Teachers do have good holidays and you start to think if they were interested... They're not all teachers, but the thing is that it's easy to say that isn't it. But I understand what they mean because professional people probably are more articulate than some and they're not backward at coming forward and that can deter people and I think there is an issue there. But if people are interested in an issue they will get involved. But, you seen, then there's another step. If you went to Sutton or Solihull you have maybe the same number of groups but much more support, you know, because there are more professional people. So that's one of the things really but, to be honest, if people want to come along and help...I mean, when we have quiz's we have a mixture, you know.*

Q: Yer, but personally, when you first turned up, they had a parish meeting, you said, and they were trying to get participants in various groups..

- *Yer, I mean they had them because it was a dynamic thing, they weren't just starting it, they were establishing it. You know, you're new to the parish and you say, 'well, what is there?' well there's the SVP the Catholic Youth...*

Q: You wanted to become involved before?

- *Oh yer, it's, it's, you know, something I've been interested in terms of, you know, the er Third World type thing, you know. Well, most people do have don't they.*

Q: It's not something like, you know, the Catholic dimension to it, it's more to do with you being interested in it?

- *Oh yer, I mean, a lot of the time you just feel so powerless. There's a political agenda to it, that actually came up. [..Parish name..] has a lot of constituencies which were pre-election a Tory constituency [sic] and er..., last year the [..Parish name..] council of the Churches which is a sort of Christian group, highlighted the arms trade and there were landmines and other things, and they asked if each of the equivalent of this group in the other Christian religions would contact their MP to ask them what their position was on the arms trade, I mean it*

got sort of decadent their at the end with the Tories didn't it? So I said I'm not going to do it then, this was about last June, I said there's going to be an election and so wait until the election and ask the guys opinion

Q: When he's got nothing better to do!

LAUGHTER

- *I had a very irate phone call from his erm, what do you call them? his agent who heard that I was going to write this letter and said I'd be better off writing it at Christmas, so..waffle. Anyway, he got kicked out with a huge majority and good riddance to them, and um.. Robin Cook then said that foreign affairs and this sort of thing was going to be more balanced and less xenophobic. So when I went to the next meeting I was able to say, I'm sure it didn't have a great deal of effect, but at least there was a different emphasis with this government in terms of what we were doing. So, I think there's that as well, isn't there really? That these agencies are so desperate for money that because the little bit of money government used to give them has been decimated and got next to nothing. So, therefore, all these organisations, anything, things like Amnesty were unpalatable to the Tories but would probably be more palatable to Labour, you know. So there's that business as well, which also interests me.*

Q: Well, it's quite interesting really because, reading some of the literature around the Church's involvement in parish groups, not just Justice and Peace, but things like SVP and er, things like youth groups and OAP groups, there's an argument that their compounding a wider problem, that their not addressing the wider politics. To a certain extent you can see how that could happen but on a more basic level maybe there's an argument that they are addressing it but on a more incremental level, instead of revolution, evolution, what do you think?

- *I want to make that point you see, because the Tories were...You would never have thought that this constituency would have become Labour. It could possibly become Liberal Democrat, but you wouldn't have thought Labour. So, erm, at the meetings we had I needed to highlight that there's such negligence by the Tories, not necessarily this group, throughout...The point you're making is that foreign affairs and overseas aid just became market forces, you know, 'couldn't afford it'*

CONSIDERABLE NOISE IN HALL ADJACENT TO ROOM

- *So I think that was quite an important thing really. With the Labour thing, there is a little bit of optimism. Hang on a minute.*

RESPONDENT SHOUTS TO CORRIDOR TO FIND OUT WHAT NOISE IS ABOUT

- *So I think now, I don't know really. I think you can ascribe the general election result to a lot of things can't you? But I do think that most people do have a concern for the poor, as condescending as that might be, er...*

Q: I don't know how much you know, but what about other groups like the SVP and other kinds of organisations in the parish, is there a more kind of radical outlook?

- *I'm not sure that.., They're basically conservative with a small and a large 'c' because there's not a political agenda as far as their concerned. Their doing it for the reasons of faith, you know. And so when you raise something like this at a parish meeting it doesn't go down very well. They think that you're being political. I mean to say that the whole thing is political. I mean Africa's left whereas Kuwait was a big thing because as far as they're concerned...So there's that sort of thing. But you don't really get into that sort of discussion because I think they think we're there to help as opposed to discuss things in a political way.*

Q: Do you actually work closely in conjunction with other voluntary bodies outside the larger bodies on a local basis?

- *Well, there is a network in Birmingham, you get newsletters from that type of organisation..*

PASSES LEAFLET TO RESEARCHER

- *You've got, again you see, it's related indirectly, the Catholic Agency for Racial Justice, which is another to which we're affiliated to erm, now that is both national and international. So there's agencies like that within the Catholic Church, which sort of integrate in terms of Justice and Peace.*

Q: What about in terms of non-religious organisations or maybe other groups from the Church of England?

- *Erm, there's the [..parish name..] Council of Churches which is all the religious faiths in Birmingham. But also there's the Birmingham Council of the Churches and there'll be somebody from the parish who's on the Hall Green one and also on the Birmingham... So they're there, but they're not there explicitly in terms of Justice and Peace, they're just sitting in terms of the overall Christian religions across the city.*

Q: So the Justice and Peace group that you're involved in is confine. It does its own work basically.

- *Yer, yer, there's very little, we have occasionally... For example, when we have events you'll have someone from another parish coming up and saying, you know,*

'we'll come and support'. There's a bit of that but it's not formalised in any kind of way.

Q: Are there any non-Catholics involved in the group?

- *I wouldn't be aware of it really. I mean, they would come... Communication is done through the parish, so, from that point of view, they wouldn't know that anything was taking place.*

Q: Have you come across any problems? You said that you tried to politicise aspects but some people regard it as more of an option of faith rather than having a more political aim. Do you find that a problem?

- *I wouldn't volunteer it unless, it, it would deter people if it was too politicised because, like you say, there are other reasons. But you can maybe have the background to it erm, but there's various arguments. There's things like that..*

HANDS OVER LEAFLET

- ..that you talk about, but a lot of people don't make the connection as to why the situations like that in terms of capitalism, you know. It's 'isn't this dreadful, we're so much richer than other countries, we must send them something', as opposed to...I mean, it's cause and effect isn't it? So they wouldn't get into that sort of discussion because it'd be a bit too heavy. So, yer, we do look at things occasionally, but then again, it's not so much a debating thing as a happening.

Q: Fr. [name of Parish priest] said that there's a lot of teachers actually in various organisations and clubs, maybe leaning towards values that you've got?

- *Some might, but again in the 92 election, 65% of teachers voted Tory. So, just because they're teachers...um. It's also to do with the area, which is basically, although the constituency is now Labour, the ward is Tory stroke Liberal Democrat. So this particular area is probably a natural Conservative ward. So the people who live here, even the teachers, probably wouldn't be Labour. I mean that might be New Labour that's thrown everything out. So yer, you might find that the teachers have more of a social conscience working in Birmingham, but I don't think they'd be particularly radical in terms of their views because, although, you know you do get teachers in other areas, here they're probably apolitical.*

Q: What do you think the motivations are for the other members of the group to have er..., become involved?

- *The thing really is, you know, everyone's got their own story to tell in terms of..., and I think the people we've had in the group present and past, their there because of some personal experience, either they've met a priest who's been shifted out or*

gone out to the missions or something, struck a cord in them. I don't know how much it has to do with community. I certainly don't do it as a community thing because, living in a city. I mean, the parish has a sort of community but you wouldn't necessarily know the people living next door but one to you and in the parish you see them once a week, but in the parish there's not that sense of community in that people know everyone. What, I'd say, like Merthyr, where everyone knows everyone else. It's more to do with the feeling that you could do something useful in terms of this particular area as opposed to a community commitment. It's a pretty thankless thing really because nobody knows whose in the group. I mean about three or four years ago to make it a little more visible we had our photographs taken of [sic] the people who are in charge of the various groups and those, you know, you get them everywhere now, the 'rogues gallery', and they had the person who was in charge of the various groups, so they could put a face to it, and then it was suggested that, instead of a sermon, someone from the group goes a gives a talk to raise the profile. I mean, this time last year we had a mission packed out, during Euro'96, and we had every night an exhibition in the hall and talk about the work they did, to get people more involved in the parish. It was incredibly successful, but not one person joined a group. Because, people went in the hall after the service, they had a cup of tea, whatever it was, they came around and looked, they spoke to people but nobody came forward and that was a cross section, that wasn't the sort of, the professional. You know, a mission sort of reaches out to everybody. I think it is probably a class thing to some extent. I think maybe people are intimidated by professional people but the other thing is time isn't it? Managing your time. I've got three kids and the wife works so it's not as if we've got a lot of leisure time. But you can manage a bit of time, erm. Perhaps a professional person, I mean it sounds terrible doesn't it? , a professional person.., whereas if you're an unskilled you'll probably say that you're physically tired, it isn't part of your day.

Q: Do you find it problematic, the actual work involved?

- *Oh yer, it's... You can do without it sometimes because um, we've had a lot of hassle with the bank because they've changed the regulations and you think, you know, this is ridiculous. You go up to the bank and you've got to fill this form in and that form in. But then you think in terms of the good and the response we get. You know, a fiver can change people's lives. I mean, kids at school, they drop fifty pences and they don't bother to pick them up! It's because of the devaluation of our money. Someone was telling me that if you get an empty tube of smarties and fill it with twenty pence pieces, someone can live on that for a month and it's things like that. Then you realise the value of money, when you build a water mil,*

you then think, 'that wouldn't have been there otherwise'. But there is a community because sometimes, we did a lot of work in erm, I think it was Liberia where they had the civil war? Anyway, the guy got bombed out, and we paid for a roof. When he went back they'd just wrecked everything, nicked the roof. It makes you think. We're just freeing up an evening, some people are giving up their lives, you know?

Q: Yer, are you involved in any other groups?

- *I have been in the past. I was involved in the Eucharistic thing. When the kids were doing theirs, instead of just going along and being a consumer I went along and helped, that sort of thing. Erm, I've been involved in the parish in terms of being a Eucharistic minister, that sort of thing. If you're retired there's less pressure, but at the moment this is enough to be going on with, you know?*

Q: You've brought you're kids up as Catholics, do you think that's had any effect on you becoming involved in terms of feeling more er, obligated to the parish?

- *Tremendous isn't it? My brother just came in. He's head of the school, the Catholic Primary school and they all went to the school and the Secondary school now. It sort of confirms your position within the parish because they network, because they've all got friends and know their parents. So you do feel that you've put roots down and if you didn't have kids you wouldn't have that network and now they're at the Secondary school their slightly wider because, obviously, Catholic Secondary schools pick them from a wider area whereas the Primary school all live around here. It does, it cements your relationship with them because, I mean, the parents are the people that you see at church at the weekend, the Primary not the Secondary because they come from different parishes. There was one stage when the three of them were at Primary school. They do things at the Primary school and you've got the same people at the school as in the parish. So you see them a lot, but then they all went to different schools and you lose that. People are much more tied to Primary school than they are Secondary school. I mean, I teach in Secondary school and you don't get anywhere near the support in the Secondary schools. Parents are interested in their own performance, they're not interested in the whole school thing whereas in a Primary school they are committed to the whole school thing because they have a loyalty towards it. I think that the parish is pretty weak in terms of its commitment to things but it's all comparative? When we did the exhibition during the mission, if you went into the hall you'd think it was a very dynamic sort of active parish because there was all this stuff. But in reality it's just going alone, it's not like that, you know. There's a certain balance to it of how important these things seem. I mean the perception of people is that these are people with nothing better to do, we've got nothing better*

to do and that's sometimes the perception of people who don't get involved in this sort of stuff. Um, I think the other thing that's important is racism, although not necessarily associated with this because its overseas aid but er, I do think that race is an issue in the Catholic faith which I think... In this parish the Catholics would tend to be Irish or Italian and the race thing then isn't there. In the 50s Sparkhill was a huge parish and there's a number of other parishes similar, and then the Irish, generally speaking, managed to do well for themselves and moved down the arterial roads of Birmingham and were replaced by black immigrants and then the Asians. What's happened in the last thirty years, if you drive around the city, in the inner parts you get poor, very poor housing, you'd have the Asian, negligible catholic population, and as you work you're way down there's been a drift of the more mobile Catholic population towards places like Chorley. Part of it's a racist thing, part of it's an immigrant thing. A lot of people living around here would move to Chorley if they could because they would find the number of non-whites undesirable. Now that's an issue in the Catholic Church. Whereas something like this, there's no association with it. This helping people who can't help themselves. So there's no reflection upon their attitudes towards these people which might be a bit patronising and the people who they don't want to live next door to. I also think that there's a role for catholic education in that because Catholic schools would have very few blacks. So that's an issue. you'd go into most Catholic schools in Birmingham and you'd have an exclusively white population, not all-Catholic schools. We have a proportion of people who aren't white. But you've got that as well.

Q: Is that a problem with the catholic education system per se, that they only attract Catholics?

- *Yer, but I also think it's a thing of 'well, it's not an issue'. Erm, like my wife teaches at Catholic school. Again, it's not exclusively white because of the nature of the intake and the population of the school racism is addressed as an issue. In a school where there are no non whites or hardly any non-white, when you talk to people from there it's not issue, 'why do we need to discuss this sort of thing? We don't have any black children so therefore why are we spending any time discussing it? It's a very narrow focusing as much as they don't realise that they live in a pluralist society and that Birmingham is, you know, once the kids leave school.... I think it's very unhealthy, because, erm, my parents came from Merthyr, my wife's come from..., well their Scottish, you can kind of forgive.. , understand their racial attitudes because that's their experience but if that's going to be sustained through the children, then that's a danger, you've got no chance of changing things. Why are we wasting time with things like this? You know we*

should be getting on changing the national curriculum because it's a very dubious attitude to have. Secular schools address it because of the population of the kids. Catholic schools don't necessarily address it because they don't see the need, you know. For future generations there's no hope if they don't change. But Catholic schools are doing well in the league tables that have just come in. There's a number f reasons for that. There's the basic moral code, all the rest of it, but they point that out and say 'good school, why do we have to water it down by talking about social issues?' It's not a priority. We had a parent trying to get their child in to our school and we said, 'well, are you Catholic?' and they said, 'Well, what do you have to do to become Catholic?' because, marketing isn't it? People believe that Catholic schools are the best. But I think that these issues should be addressed whether the school is.., you see, it's an insipid thing. It's also to do with the 'Irish' thing. The issue of social justice and Northern Ireland. They tend to concentrate on that aspect of it.

Q: What kind o role does Fr.[names Parish priest] take in the life of the parish?

- *He's more sort of..., what could be termed a lighter sort of rein really in that he's fortunate that he's got certain people who run these things. Well, it's management isn't it. I mean, he delegates these things and people get on with them..., erm, and he leaves them get on with it. Now, you can criticise that or you can praise it but in these terms it's effective. There is a frustration in the parish that he should be more 'hands -on' and he should be more, you know, encouraging people to join these things which he doesn't do. I mean, he does support it in various ways, but a different person, perhaps a different age, whatever, personality, you might be... But on the other hand I think that that can sometimes be alienating because his thing is that you can cause divides in the parish if you get too involved so he tends to take a back seat, and it happens er...I think he is a good organiser. He is aware of what's going on. It's not as if...he will ask for the accounts. But in other parishes where you have priests more involved it can alienate people. What the happy medium is I don't know. But his thing, I would say, is the light touch.*

Q: The actual genesis of most of these clubs and groups, who would they be down to? Are they down to Fr. Gunn [Parish priest] ?

- *No, but from our point of view we do give him a copy of the minutes of each meeting which states what we've done, how much we've spent, what the next thing is. So from our point of view he..., well, he basically trusts..., I can't speak for other groups, he trusts what we're doing. If there was something.., an issue on which he didn't approve, like, there was the one thing on their which was a bit of a grey area where there was a thing in Britain and he said 'no, you can't'. He trusts*

you to get on with it you see. He will suggest things as well, but allow you to get on with it. Once he knows that there's no fiddling going on he just lets you get on with it, which, probably, in the life of an organisation is the best way to do it, as opposed to throwing you're weight around because you could easily upset someone. I mean, as it's voluntary, someone wading in and saying 'load of lefties!' because I could see that happening, or if somebody came in and said 'is that all you do?' I mean, it's management styles isn't it. Parish priests are management now as opposed to the old days when they were just feted. Erm, so I wouldn't say he's proactive but he is shrewd and he knows sufficiently about what's going on to let then get on. It'd be interesting if you was in another parish, if he went to Sparkhill. But it's horses for courses isn't it. He's been here now for the best part of 15-20 years, and he'll probably never leave because, for whatever reason, he suits here. they must have some sort of idea who's suited for what.

INTERVIEW ENDS